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TALES FROM



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T A L E S

FROM

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FALSELY ACCUSED.

WITCH-HAMPTON HALL.



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TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

WHO PAINTED THE GREAT MURILLO DE LA MERCED?

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

[MAGA. AUGUST 1870.]

CHAPTER I.

IT is a long time now since I was twenty-three, and a student in the Royal Academy. I had loved and practised my art, enthusiastically, before school-time, in and out of school-time, and since school-time—as child, youth, and man—for sixteen years; and, there can be no doubt, had been overdoing it. My thin face and hands were white and hectic as a ballet-girl's. I had, too, a tightness across my chest that the doctor said was rather alarming, and for which he prescribed a year or two of Italy. Seldom do patients anticipate taking their medicine with so much delight as I did.

Why I did not use mine at once was a want of means to pay for it. I had friends who would have helped me if they could; but, like myself, every one of them only lived from hand to mouth. Of relations I had but one, who, if he had the will, was in a position to assist me, and he was settled in Spain. Taking heart of grace, I made appeal to him. I sincerely wish that every nephew in circumstances such as mine may find an uncle as kind. He placed to my account with his correspondent in London a sum larger than I had asked; expressed great affection for and sympathy with me; but disapproved of my medico's prescription, and recommended a different mode of treatment. There was no climate in the world, he insisted, so likely to do me good as that of Spain; if I required nursing, he promised that my aunt and cousins should make a pet of me; and, he asserted, all that artists go about the world looking for could be found more readily there than anywhere else; and, finally, he put as a question, where, besides, could I find such masters to study from as Ponz, Polomino, Morales, Murillo, Zurbaran? The names fired me. I adopted my uncle's opinions, took his advice, and in little more than a week was looking out ahead across the Bay of Biscay for Cadiz *en route* for Seville.

Hope and a sunny voyage set me up wonderfully; and when I got out, it was little nursing,

but a good deal of feeding, that I wanted. What a glorious life I led for a couple of years !—everything provided ; nothing to care about ; a hundred master-pieces within reach, and every one worth having come the distance to see ; to say nothing of health, leisure, and opportunity. Rich as they were in other great masters, the convents, churches, and galleries were especially rich in Murillos — the greatest painter, I think, that ever existed. Him I stuck to, as no one is ever followed up but from intense love, or perhaps hate. That's how and where I got, what people call, my "Spanish style."

When I came back to England, I had the uphill work common to all who independently aspire to gain the heights of a profession. There was nothing for it but with patience to abide my time, and cherish hope while diligently working on in faith—three virtues I strenuously recommend to all in similar circumstances.

My studio was in Newman Street, and I had occupied it now for five months without receiving a single commission, although the dealers—terrible screws !—had bought some five or six of my Spanish Studies. I had for several weeks been suffering again from a return of my old nervous complaint, when a circumstance, which I should have thought much more likely to happen in the land I had come from than in that I was returned to, occurred.

As certain dates are all-important to the well

understanding my story, I mention that it begins in the afternoon of March 28, 1823.

I had left off work much earlier than usual; for the day, which had scarcely known a dawn, was, later, quite borne down by a thick fog of Egyptian darkness. I was battling time, till I could go out to some place of amusement, by the help of a cigar, an own-made pot of coffee, and a blazing fire, with no other light, so that the recesses of my studio were in deep obscurity. Sitting in front of the grate, I suffered my imagination to become so excited and my regards so engrossed by the wonderful pictures perceptible among the glowing coals, that neither a knock at the door nor the noise of a person entering attracted my notice. My attention was first aroused by a sound close to me—a curious sound, in which a husky wheeze and a heavy sob were both embodied. Starting up, I beheld a tall, veiled female figure, dressed entirely in black, standing behind the chair from which I had just sprung.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, quite unnerved, "what are you?—where do you come from?"

"I gnockt, an' taught I he'ert you zay coom in," she replied in a deep guttural voice, accompanied by asthmatic gasps similar to those which had so startled me.

"Are you a model?" I asked, recovering my self-possession.

"Sare !—a mottle ? I ra'ader tink not !" she answered, drawing herself up, and speaking with great haughtiness. "I ist a la'atee—a rish la'atee ; an' I coom apout a gommission fore you."

"A thousand pardons !—but I was taken so by surprise."

"Nefare meint—don't mention eet. Now let me talk mit you."

"Certainly, madam. I will just get lights."

"I vo'ot ra'ader not—for de zake of mine eyes. Vee can talk ferry vell mitout."

"As you please, madam," I answered, placing a chair.

I took the opportunity of observing her. She was so thickly veiled that not a feature could be discovered ; but occasionally, as they reflected a gleam from the fire, what seemed a pair of brilliant eyes flashed through the heavy pattern of the lace. A thick curl of black hair, which had escaped from under her bonnet, lay a straggling, untidy mass, on her shoulder. She was enveloped in wrappers from head to foot, and her hands were gloved. My scrutiny was a failure.

"Curious, very !" I thought to myself ; "a lady !—with that voice ! Dutch, I should say,—ah !—that perhaps accounts for it."

"Vee vants you"—and, curiously, in all our conversations, then and subsequently, she always used the plural pronoun,—“Vee vants you to baint a

picture from de life—halfe lengt; aber, vee moos hafe a pargain."

"Certainly, madam;—what do you propose?"

"Subbose eet take you von mont': you cooms an' you leef in our house in de gountry; an' you doos eem so kevick as afer you can—an' vee gifs you two hundert kinnies."

"Delighted, I am sure, madam!" I replied, my breath so taken away by the splendid offer that I could scarcely muster enough to utter the words.

"Ferry vell!—an' vee gifs you de money at vonce—de two hundert now."

She marked the adverb strongly in speaking, and still more emphatically by laying down, with a thump upon the table, what appeared to be a leathern bag, from which the jingling of coin, though muffled, was clearly distinguishable. "An'," she continued, "eef you doos eem as vee ist pleast, vee vont meint to gif you anoder hundert."

"That—is—very—liberal," I managed to gasp out.

"Ferry goot! Dat ist vhat vee doos. Now den, vhat *you* doos ist dis. You moos gife us your vort of honour, as you stays in our house alle de time, and dat you nefare shpeaks to nopotty as you sees dere—nopotty but me—not von vort; an' dat you nefare asts no kevestions—bartic'ler, as you asts no kevestions. Doos you unterstant?"

"Quite clearly, madam."

“Ferry goot ! All de time, you unterstant, you moos pe pris’ner—you moos be *au secret* ?”

“Well, it’s not for very long, however.”

“No long-er as you makes to baint your picture.”

“Well, madam, I must try to fight it out as well as I can.”

“Yah wohl ! Dere ist efery tings as makes you gom - fortable — ya’es ! Den dere ist ’noderting. When you ’as done dis picture—meint !—you for-gits eet—you moos know noting of eet. Eef efer you see eet, you nefare zay you baint eet. Eet is lee-tle secret. Vee makes our pargain mit you for our lee-tle secret. Vee takes your vort of honour, as von shen’l’mans, nefare to talk of eet—nefare to know noting at all apout eet—nefare—noting at all. You unterstant all dat—kevite ?”

“You mean, I suppose, madam, that on my part this transaction, when complete, must be as if it had never been.”

“Goot gesagt ! Yah !” she exclaimed, evidently pleased. “So ist’s recht, kevite.”

“Then, madam, I can have no hesitation in giving my word of honour to observe your stipulations.”

“Nun recht ! Ferry goot. Den you coom ’long mit me in our garriage,” she said, rising.

“But, madam, I have preparations to make——”

“Das thut nicht ! Dere is studio mit ganvas, mit golours, mit eferyting. But more as eferyting,

particular, dere ist hurry. You moos baint dis picture at vonce—pegin dis evenin'. What you zay?—eferyting you vant ist dere."

"In that case, madam, I will soon be ready."

"Den I vait; aber, de sooner de besser."

I was in a state of ecstatic excitement. The adventure blended with something romantic in my disposition; the emolument, for a picture of the size proposed, was to me at the time magnificent; and it quickened into sudden bloom hopes that had sunk torpid in the shadow of long-continued, cold neglect. As soon as I was alone in my chamber, an ignoble curiosity, I am afraid, urged me to ascertain by sight, tale and weight of the precious bag's contents, whether I had not been dreaming. I was never in my life more happily wide awake than while counting over those two hundred and ten beautiful, ponderous sovereigns, and locking them securely away; pitching some things into my portmanteau, and, after pausing only to inform my landlady that I had a sudden commission in the country which would keep me absent for probably a month, declaring my readiness to proceed, and descending with my patroness into the street.

We found the fog so impervious that I hesitated about trusting myself to pass through the thoroughfares in the vehicle, which I could only just discern was there waiting. Not so the lady,—she entered it at once. I was not suffered to remain undecided;

for a man laid hold of my colour-box and portmantau, threw them up in front, and ascended himself; while two others, seizing my arms, half helped, half pushed me hurriedly into the carriage, one of them rudely exclaiming, "Now den, mister, in wid ye, blease." As his face came close to mine, the light of the lamp fell full upon it. There was no mistaking what race he belonged to—he was a Jew. Short as was my glimpse of them, it was long enough for his features to impress themselves so on my memory as to make me confident I could recognise him at any future time. It flashed upon me, also, now my attention was attracted to it, that the accent with which he had spoken was identical with his mistress's. It was, therefore, more than probable that she was a Jewess.

The moment I was in, the carriage proceeded. I found that all the blinds were carefully drawn down so as to exclude every ray of light, as well as all chance of observing the direction it took.

"A-w-ach ! ah-ugh !" exclaimed, or rather coughed, my companion, her voice not at all improved by the fog ; "ugh !—hafe you find de mo'oney alle right ?"

At the moment I was quite grateful to the darkness which prevented the scarlet that I felt rushing to my brow from being visible. It enabled me to answer composedly, and to change the subject.

"Oh, I can have no doubt it is perfectly correct—

thanks. Pray, madam, is it a lady or a gentleman I am to paint?"

"Vell, eet is a la'atee, an' part of a shen'l'man. Ach! you ought to hafe gount your mo'oney, an' look eef eet vas all goot—I allevays doos."

A lady, and only part of a gentleman!

"I beg your pardon," I said; "I do not quite understand."

"Vee is not long pefore vee is dere, an' you sees," she replied. "I tinks you vill like your subject. Do you meint to baint mit a lamp? Eet is besser you pegins de shob at vonce—dere ist no time to los apout eet."

I lay back in my corner of the carriage in a state of great mental perplexity. In the little time we had been together the language of my travelling companion had grown perceptibly coarser, and some of her expressions were vulgarly offensive. Who could she be? Where were we going? Above all, what was "part of a gentleman"? There was nothing for it but patience, and the recollection of the bag of gold at home; for however I might blush at the mention of the money, a very sound gratification sprang out of having it in positive possession. Of course I could form no idea of our direction; we were progressing at a very slow rate, but the fog would make it highly dangerous to go faster. From the same cause, doubtless, the usual uproar in the streets was less. I could perceive at

first that we made frequent turnings; but after some time the carriage appeared to go, at greatly accelerated speed, straight on; and a silence prevailed that convinced me we had got into the country. It seemed more than double the time, but we must have been boxed up the better part of an hour, when, making a sudden turn into what struck me as a gravelled sweep, in a minute after the carriage stopped.

I had by this time worked myself into a state of great nervous excitement. The circumstances which occurred as the door on my side opened, and I put my foot on the step to descend, by no means tended to allay it. A dark cloth was thrown over my head; my arms were seized by persons on each side, who irresistibly led me forward, up some steps, into a passage, as I suppose, for I heard a heavy door close behind me; and on again—first this way, then that, right and left, till all my perceptions of distance and position were utterly confused, and finally deposited me, still hooded, in a remarkably comfortable easy-chair. Between distress at being half stifled and the excitement of mystery, doubt, and apprehension, I was nearly fainting; but hearing a door softly shut, and finding my arms at liberty, I tore off the cloth that covered my face.

I found myself quite alone, and gazed around in the extremity of wonder. I was in a large and

well-lighted room. The illumination was produced by a cluster of lamps disposed beneath a powerful reflector, admirably contrived and adapted for artistic purposes, and enabling me to observe that the apartment was superbly furnished as a painter's studio. The ceiling was pierced by a sloping skylight over the lamps, but no apertures for windows were visible in the lofty walls. If any existed, they were hidden by a noble piece of tapestry which covered the side on my right from ceiling to floor, as if it had been wrought expressly to its dimensions. In the angles next the tapestry, and opposite each other, were two doors of dark polished mahogany. All the walls were tinted with that dusky red which throws out so well, and relieves with warm reflections, objects opposed to it. Evidently, by the blanched colour of the tinting where they were hung, these walls had been covered with pictures frequently changed; for their markings ran into or over one another in a way sufficiently convincing to an experienced eye: at present they did not carry a single canvas. On my left, judiciously placed as regarded the light, was an artist's throne—that is, an estrade or low platform—covered by a Turkey carpet, and supporting, instead of the usual sitter's chair, a verd-antique and white marble pedestal, surmounted by what appeared to be, from the level where I sat, whence the massive rim only was visible, a large silver salver. Between this

and the wall hung a piece of heavy purple drapery. Close to where I sat was an old carved oak-table, covered, as I perceived at a glance, with knowingly-selected implements and materials for my work, and with my own colour-box and telescope maul-stick. Standing in front, and below the throne, with a canvas resting on it, was an easel. Further on, still enveloped in its baize covering, I could see a lay-figure. Here and there against the walls, or standing out upon the floor, were cabinets, tables, and chairs, various in pattern and material, but each so rare, picturesque, elegant, or curious, that, for either one of them, half the fellows I knew would have given their ears, and at once set about composing a picture to introduce a portrait of it.

It was a luxurious seat in which I found myself. I had not yet so entirely recovered from what I may as well call my fright, as to be able to leave it. Indeed I was still trembling from head to foot. My observations certainly had discovered nothing to increase my alarm ; on the contrary, they helped to compose and reassure me. It was plain, I reasoned, that not only no ill was intended towards me, but that, having been brought there for the purpose avowed, the concomitant circumstances were only such as the parties who had engaged my services thought it prudent to employ for enforcing the stipulation of profound secrecy. Why there should be any secrecy I at once determined was no busi-

ness of mine ; and, for the moment, in blissful ignorance, dismissed the subject from my thoughts.

After a time I assumed courage to get up and make a more minute survey of the many attractive objects scattered around. Going from one to the other, I found those I might require, each well suited for its purpose ; and beside them, heaped, with little attempt at arrangement, on chairs, tables, and shelves, a profusion of costly, curious, and beautiful articles—shawls, scarfs, tissues, vases, plate, gems—so desirable for an artist's use as to make me sigh covetously that they were not "all mine and none of my neighbours'," besides wondering more and more who and what those neighbours could be.

At length my attention became greatly interested in the canvas which stood ready to receive the picture I was to paint. It struck me with astonishment to find it of real Spanish cloth, and that it was on a stretcher of Spanish oak, worm-eaten, dark with age, and undoubtedly a genuine antique. While puzzling myself why and how these things should be, I stepped upon the estrade. As I recollect that moment, I seem to feel again the great throb that my heart gave, and the sickening pause during which I could draw no breath, at the sight which met my eyes. But for a thought, as sudden as my look, that what I saw was only a work of frightful art, I am afraid to think what

the effect of the shock might have been. In the deep silver salver, already mentioned as surmounting the marble pedestal, seeming freshly severed from the trunk, bespattered and bedabbled in a pool of blood, was lying a human head—that of a man, probably thirty years old—the features eminently beautiful, relieved in their bloodless pallor by magnificent black hair and a sable beard. Unquestionably it was the face of a Jew, and as unquestionably the same face I had seen and scrutinised only an hour before.

I think it was the recognition that enabled me to withstand the shock ; for, while seeing it was he, I knew it could not be he. Lightning-like, under some conditions, are the operations of the mind. In less than a moment I seemed to reason and bring out my conclusion—that the man whom I had remarked by the light of the carriage-lamp must have been the model for this admirable effigy of a John Baptist's head ; executed, probably, to satisfy some morbid devotional feeling. I was so convinced, that curiosity began to prevail over my first horror and disgust. But while I gazed, my sense encountered the unmistakable odour of blood and death. A convulsive desperation forced me to put forth a shrinking finger and to touch the sad cheek. Good God !—it was real—it was dead flesh !

What a horror fell upon me ! The touch acted

like a spell to burst the cerements of a thousand tales of crime that I had heard or read, and buried in my memory. Starting from each uprose a gashed and bloody spectre, till my imagination was thronged with frightful forms of murder. I remember feeling an irresistible terror mingled with loathing, then a sense of deadly sickness; then—I recollect nothing for a time—I had fainted.

How long an interval elapsed before I recovered I know not. My first consciousness was of some pungent essence acting acutely upon my nasal organs; and at the same time of choking by brandy, which some one was pouring down my throat. Gasping for breath, I started up for a moment wondering where I was, and what had happened; but all the circumstances of the situation soon flashed upon me. Now others were added to them, which, if not so frightful in character, were certainly to the full as mysterious. With the tingling in my nose, and the taste of cognac on my palate—with my sable-veiled guide holding a vinaigrette in one hand, and a *petit verre* in the other—I could not for a single moment make a pretence to myself that I was dreaming. Yet what met my look was more like the splendid creation of a vision than a being of waking reality. Standing on the estrade—lightly poised on one sandalled foot, with the other thrown just behind it, and resting only on the bent toe; one exquisitely modelled arm

hanging loosely from the rounded shoulder, the other, gracefully curved at the elbow and wrist, with the hand supported on the rim of the ominous salver by the forefinger only ; the rich swellings of the pearly bust thrown high in half-profile ; the wondrous visage turned towards me, with, oh, such marvellous depths of calm wistful sorrow in the large brown eyes !—I beheld a young female whose beauty of form and face surpassed all I had ever seen in nature or art—whose loveliness was beyond all that my happiest imaginations had ever conceived.

Her dress was superbly adapted to her beauty. Suspended from the left shoulder by an embroidered strap with a large jewelled clasp at its middle, she had on a gold-tinted tunic of some gorgeous tissue as soft and glittering as satin, but like no satin I had ever seen, falling lightly across the breast on that side, and leaving all the other, to the waist, with the shoulder and arm, bare ; from under a girdle, thickly studded with precious stones, clasping the waist high up beneath the bosom, it hung in straight folds, reaching only to the knee, and terminating in a border of high-embossed ornaments upon purple velvet. The ends of a scarf arabesqued with gold figures upon a white ground, as transparent and delicate as lace, and terminating in gold fringes so ponderous and deep that it was a marvel they could be sustained by so slight a

texture, were brought from behind over the hips, and fell in unequal lengths from the knot, low in front, by which they were confined. A tiara of sapphires and diamonds blazed across her forehead, and among the wavy masses of her glorious hair, rich with lights of ruddy yellow and purple shades. Claspings the upper part of her white rounded arm was a cincture of heavy gold with long pendants of emeralds; and enormous jewels, which gleamed like rubies set in circlets of pearls, hung in her small pink ears. More jewels flashed from her wrists and fingers, and from the lacings of her purple sandals. How shall I describe her further? Tall, graceful, slender, yet full and exquisitely rounded, her form looked perfect in womanhood; but among the finely-chiselled features of her face a fresh girlhood seemed yet to linger and play, despite a constant look of sorrow, so tender and mournful—so appealing—that it touched the pity in my heart, and caused it to vibrate with all the pain of her surmised but unknown suffering.

The trance of surprise into which I had fallen while gazing was broken by the croaking voice of my hostess asking, in a really affectionate sort of way—

"Ist you petter now, oder vill you hafe some more prantee?"

"Good God!" I cried, "what is the meaning of this?"

“De meanin’?—vhat of?”

“That bloody head—that lady?”

“Dat ist de laa-tee you ist to baint, an’ dats de part of de shen’l’man I shpeak apout,” she answered, coolly. “Ve wants a Salome mit a Shone Paptist. Besser you doos *een* so kevick as efer you can; he vont keep long, you knows.”

She spoke of the dreadful object as indifferently as if she were a butcher’s wife talking of mutton-chops.

“Great heaven! madam, I cannot, unless I am satisfied as to his fate.”

She came to my front, and, I suppose, stared hard at me; then after a pause, raised her gloved hand, and shaking the forefinger in my face, spoke in a very decided manner—

“I tellt you as vee hafe our secret. You has gife your vort as you ast no kevestions. All vhat you has to do is to baint de picture—dem ist our pargains; alle oder ting ist no peassiness of yours.”

There could be no doubt of it—she was right. I glanced appealingly from her to the wonderful creature standing on the throne, but encountered only the same look of wistful sorrow which had so thrilled me already. I was about to remonstrate again.

“Hear me, madam. I——” but she interrupted me at once.

"Besser dan you talks you shticks to our par-gain; an' you finds vee vont pe vorsser as ours."

I felt rather cowed. The resolute tone in which she spoke, the recollection of the way I had lately been handled, and the thick black veil which repelled all attempts to judge of the speaker by feature and expression, together, tended to impress my excited apprehension menacingly—to silence and subdue me. Besides, just then, at, I imagine, some unobserved signal, the beautiful young lady, lifting the salver with its livid burden, threw herself into a pose which, whether it had been previously studied or was spontaneous, so perfectly satisfied my ideas of grace and meaning, that my art-enthusiasm soon superseded all other subjects and emotions.

It was under these circumstances that I commenced my work. As it grew upon the canvas my ardour grew with it. Inspired by the unspeakable loveliness of my model, idea after idea rushed in upon me, each of a higher beauty than the last, but each of the last raising each of the former to its own glorious standard, till, when I threw down my port-crayon, what was as yet a mere outlined space, presented to my eyes a vision of form and expression, of glowing light and colour, whose harmonies made my spirit faint with rapture.

As I stood absorbed contemplating my sketch, the wheezy voice of my hostess broke upon my reverie—

“Soh you has doon enough for dis vonce, ferry goot ! You finds drough dere,” pointing to one of the doors, “your zimmer, your pet-room—eferyting gom-fortable. Dere ist von gallerie, vhenefer you likes to valk, vhere you can stresh your lecks. S'bose you goes dere now, an' vee has in ten ninnits subber for you here.”

Supper !—my thoughts reverted to that loathsome object in the salver. “I have been nervously ill lately,” I said ; “I fear I should be unable to eat anything with that — that, you know, before me.” I pointed as I spoke. Her voice was pitched in the highest tones of surprise as she replied—

“Curi-os ! das ist ja curi-os ! Nefers meint ; vhen you cooms pack, you finds eem not here. Vee puts eem down in de coldt to make eem keep.”

I had scarcely sickened so much at the sight itself as I did now at the way she spoke of it ; and without further parley, with one parting look at the Salome, I rushed away.

As soon as I had passed out of the studio I found myself in the gallery. From this passage, as it really was, a door opened into my bedroom. There, a cursory glance showed me, everything was perfectly comfortable. I gladly availed myself of the few minutes allowed to try—by plunging my head and hands into cold water, and by brushing the former till it smarted—to freshen up my faculties, and clear somewhat the confusion of my mind, be-

fore returning. When I did so I found beautiful lady and bloody salver both gone, and only the duenna there, as I benamed her to myself on the spot, standing beside a table set out with delicacies.

"In de dum-vaiter ist de vines—you finds dem dere," she said, pointing to it. "Vee vishes you goot abbetite. You sitz an' you shmokes here, oder you goes to your pet as mo'sh as efer you likes." She appeared to be going, but returned to say, in a most amiable manner: "Eef you ist not kevite gom-fortable, oder you vants someting, you shust tells me in de mornen', an' vee doos eet. Gute nacht, schlafen sie wohl;" and she left me alone.

Instinctively certain of its uselessness, I made no attempt to discover if there were any means of escape; but instead, with a pipe and some remarkable claret for aids—for I could eat nothing—I set myself to serious reflection. Events had occurred so rapidly, each more extraordinary than the others, every one so unprecedented in my experience, and, running through all, were circumstances so incongruous that, after vainly trying to think them over with deliberation and reason out their consequences, I gave up the attempt, and yielded myself to the fascination of one overpowering idea. All other facts and every adjunct connected with them fell away, retired, and ranged themselves behind and far beyond it—veiled themselves in a haze of remoteness, which I ceased to endeavour to pene-

trate ; while this, coming to the foreground, blazed on my imagination in its own effulgence. Beauty, such as I had seen to-night, I had never seen before ; nor had it entered into my heart that it might be. While delineating it, I had, so to speak, absorbed it—face and form, feature and limb—the sorrow-fraught look of the violet-lidded eyes, and tender seriousness of the curved lip—the lines of the rounded cheek, and the dimpled chin crowned as with a rosebud—the pearly hues of its polished skin enriched with traceries of delicate blue—the bright shimmering of the waves of its auburn hair—its grace, in every gesture making “poetry of motion,”—and, as the Eastern drug subdues its votary, I found it master all my other faculties, exciting and leaving in me but one power—to dream.

I made no attempt, at least then, to resist, but, I fear, rather instigated its tyranny, by what, for one of my abstemious habits and depressed state of health, were over-copious draughts of wine, and unusual smokings-out of many pipes. I may as well confess the consequences. I am unable to recollect any succeeding circumstances, till, on the following morning, I started up from heavy sleep, wide awake, with an aching head, a feverish trickling through all my veins, and a feeling of remorse oppressing me as for some vague crime I had committed. The luxury of a cold bath and a rapid walk up and down the outside passage to promote

circulation, however, soon restored tension to my relaxed nerves, and set me up again in body and spirit. As I became calmer, the idea of the night before recurred to my mind, but not in such overpowering force as then. Another feeling arose to share its intensity—curiosity. All my endeavours to gratify it were, however, futile. The door leading to the studio, and both the others in the passage, were locked. The window of my bedroom opened only at the top, and its lower half was blocked by an immovable shutter. Standing on a chair and looking out of the upper part, I could see nothing but the tops of evergreens growing thickly beneath, and the trunks and leafless branches of a close plantation beyond. Suddenly there recurred to me the story of the midwife, who, brought blindfold to the bedside of a lady, was enabled afterwards to identify the scene of a murder, by producing a snip of cloth, which, unobserved, she had cut from the hangings. The idea of the bloodless head, I know not how, had faded from my attention; but now, as I reflected, the possibility of its being the result of a dreadful crime revived with terrible distinctness, and set me in action. I began at once to make private marks on the walls and furniture, by which, in case of need, I could identify the place, as well as produce evidence to conviction to satisfy others. While pursuing this work, a church clock, not very remote, struck eight. I paused to count

the beats, and was resuming my furtive task, when a loud rap at my door sent the blood rushing to my heart, as if I had been caught in some horrible nefarious action. The knock was repeated before I could recover self-possession to answer or open. It was my hostess, the duenna, veiled and as imperviously disguised as before. My reflections upon her manners, language, and the character indicated by them, together with the possibility that she might be a murderess, or at least implicated with others in an abominable crime, made this woman intensely odious to me. Nothing, however, could be more kind than the manner, almost motherly, in which she bade me "Guten morgen," hoped I had slept well, and congratulated me on being an early riser.

"Dere ist your preakfast," she said, when we got into the studio. "You tinks dere ist anytings more as you vants?"

I glanced at the table—heavens! what means for a feast! Tea, coffee, toast, butter, eggs, slices of delicate beef, a fowl, a tongue, anchovies, and—a bottle of maraschino. All I could reply was to thank her for such liberal provision. Then it was arranged that, my meal finished, I should retire for half an hour to walk, and, if I liked, smoke in the gallery; meanwhile, everything would be prepared in the studio for my work.

"You doos de head of de shen'l'mans fust," suggested the lady. "Besser you doos eem fust."

"Yes, yes, certainly—by all means," I replied, with repressed loathing.

"Yah," she wheezed out, "yah, eet is besser."

Although I had eaten nothing since yesterday afternoon, and despite the provocatives to appetite before me, it was with difficulty I managed to make a very poor meal—I had such a choky sensation in my throat. The "part of the gentleman" this time had nothing to do with producing it—it was something very different. Before me was the sketch I had made a few hours ago, and the reflex of the vision that had then enchanted me resumed again, now, all its power of fascination over my fancy. I felt the danger of yielding to it, and manfully overcame the temptation of maraschino, although I was in exactly that state of perilous excitement which stimulates the desire to increase itself. These feelings only made my task, on returning to the studio from my walk, more repugnant. I had not, however, proceeded far in it before my æsthetic perceptions enabled me to regard the object I was painting *per se*. Through and beyond the mere beauty of the features, the face had acquired and retained a nobleness and dignity from the mysterious expression and unfathomable calm of death. As, too, I wrought on, the wonders of colour on the sad brow, cheek, and lip—the blendings of brown and purples beneath the sunken eyes, with the play and shimmer of light along the pale fore-

head and arched nose, over the sable hair and beard, and down among the flashing points of the embossed silver on to the sanguine drops below—revealed themselves, their contrasts and harmonies, against the equally wondrous shadows, in beauty—the power to feel which must, I suppose, be born with one, but which, however it comes, I thank heaven I have.

Once engaged in it, I became thoroughly absorbed in my work, and never paused till, having done all I could do for the present, I stopped to contemplate its effect ; when that duenna, who I began to believe was born to shake my nerves, who seemed to live and move and have her being in mystery, startled me, by asking, in her thick choky tones, “Don’t you wants your dinner?”

She was sitting behind me, very composedly, in one chair, with her feet resting upon another.

“You doos eem ferry pe-u-tifool ! eet ist vonder-fool ! Doos you not vant your dinner ? You fainst away agin eef you doos not hafe your dinner.”

“Bless my soul !” I could not help exclaiming, “how long have you been here ?”

“A-a-ch ! efer so long.”

“Did you come in at the door ?” I asked, confusedly.

“Gewiss—ya’es—drough der tore. When ist you reaty fore your dinner ?”

“Why, madam, I can do no more for the present, so when——”

"Vell, I tinks dat," she interrupted me by saying, and getting up to go; "den you goes an' vashes yourself; an' in von viertel—das ist, kevarter von hour—you cooms pack, an' you finds your dinner alle nice."

What shallow creatures we are! for myself, at least, I may confess as much. For I was immensely pleased by the duenna's admiration of what I had done; principally, perhaps, because she expressed what was in my own thought, though I had not dared to say as much to myself.

Upon my return to the studio I found a table profusely spread with luxuries, for at least one-half of which I could find no names in my experience. I may as well mention here, that all the time this adventure lasted my board was supplied with such delicious profusion, so exquisitely prepared, that its remembrance has made me a rather fastidious liver ever since. Without being conscious of it while at work, I had become much exhausted. It told upon me now, I suppose; for after dining, before getting through half a cigar, I dropped off into a sound sleep. For how long, I know not; but when I awoke—silence, mystery, and startling surprise again!—the table was cleared, the black-veiled lady was seated before my picture, and there, upon the throne, stood that vision of beauty in all her transcendent loveliness, with those eyes of hers, as full as before of appealing sadness, fixed wistfully upon

mine. Greatly abashed, and too much dazed to be perfectly self-possessed, I began to address to her a confused apology for my want of vigilance, when, starting up and interposing between us, the duenna shouted at me in her vulgar German and shrillest tones—

“Halt des mau!, gleich!” She seemed suddenly roused into uncontrollable rage, for she stamped her foot and actually threatened me with her clenched hand. “Vhat fore you dares shpeak zu de Brin-cess?—she no unterstant von vort you shpeaks; vhen you hafe so bromise, how dares you?”

I could not help being somewhat astounded by the threatening and impertinent way in which I was spoken to, but greatly more by the disclosure of the one lady's rank through the inadvertent wrath of the other. I hastened to humble myself and explain. Fortunately, the duenna was as placable as she was easily excited. And the Princess, in self-possessed dignity, appearing quite unconscious of anything disagreeable passing, I set my palette afresh and began work. Long and late, my whole soul engrossed in the beauty of my subject and the rapture of my art, I wrought. My limbs trembled from exhaustion, but still more through emotion. Singular! during all those hours, calm, still as a statue, gaining relief at long intervals by merely shifting from one small foot to the other—the old distressful expression always

predominant on her perfect features—silent, watchful, her deep earnest looks continually on mine, the Princess stood, untiringly, as no model I ever knew could stand. In the ardour of my occupation I totally forgot a proper consideration for her. By no gesture, no impatient breath even, did she suggest weariness. It was only when I felt my own fatigue that it flashed upon me how much more she required relief and rest than I did. It was to express this, with regret for my thoughtlessness, that, as I laid aside palette and brushes, I bowed to her repentantly and low. By heaven! she understood me, for she smiled and blushed—such a blush! such a smile! It was the first time—it was the only time for many a year that I saw them; but for many a year that smile and that blush were as spells upon my destiny.

It is needless, as it would be tedious recapitulation, to describe the days which followed this, the first of my adventure. None of them was marked by variety, or any circumstance of interest enough to require particular notice, irrelevantly to the great mystery that enveloped all. I finished the Baptist's head, and the mortal model disappeared. Then, morning, noon, and night, I worked on in the light of the lustrous Princess; but ever also in the shadow of her black veiled duenna, or whatever she was; and she at the conclusion of every day's work regularly praised my performance. My work

was rapidly approaching completeness. Together with the beauty of its mysterious subject, it exercised upon me a power of fascination which subjugated all my other feelings. Doubt, suspicion, alarm, even inquisitiveness, became dormant under its influence. I knew I was in a dream—a dream not indeed without pain ; but that pain was, for the present, so interwoven with delight, that I dreaded to awaken from it into ordinary life ; for then, I knew, not the warp alone, but the woof too with it, must be destroyed.

In all the many days I never heard another voice than the duenna's. She never addressed the Princess, and the Princess, it appeared to me, was disdainfully silent to her. Was she disdainful as well to me ? could she be, while hour after hour out of her wondrous eyes she poured her intense soul into mine ? Yet she took no notice of my labours. I could not but be conscious that this effort of mine surpassed all my previous efforts—that I was working under inspiration. But the Princess never once glanced at her image on my canvas—not a gesture, not a play of feature, ever showed that she took the slightest interest in it. Feeling that my art was the only possible means by which I could ever hope to approach her, except for a rather sophistical suggestion of, I suppose, my vanity, that the dignity of her rank prescribed a severe self-restraint, an abnegation of any such

vulgar emotion as curiosity—and, above all, a most consolatory idea of her taking opportunity, when I was absent, to inspect my work, as I frequently found my easel displaced from the position in which I had left it—I think her indifference would have broken my heart.

In how many ways has the old story been told! I mean not to tell it once more in mine—suffice it, the old irrepressible story revived itself in me. Could I have helped it? No, and no again! I had as much power to save myself as a wretch tied hand and foot in mid-rapid of a cataract has; once launched, the rest belonged to fate. As it was, confinement, labour, the tension upon my nerves, and over-wrought feeling, were all more or less telling upon me. My glass showed me again the haggard cheeks with hectic spots set in ghastly white, which three years before had required as a specific Italy. Every day I ate less; but, parched and burning, I drank more. Every night was more restless than the last. All night, and then all day, growing, broadening, heavy-heavier, dark-darker, a feeling like despair—like!—it was despair, sank down upon my heart. But I finished my work.

"You hafe doon?—you hafe doon mit es, alle-zugedder?" the duenna asked, as, fainting, I let palette and brushes fall, and sank into a chair.

"Altogether, madam. I should do harm by doing more."

“Von-derfool! Es ist pe-u-tifool, as I tells you pefore. Nefer meint dat now. You feels not vell—you ist ill?” she inquired, in a tone of great concern and kindness.

“I am ashamed to say,” I answered, “that I feel very faint.”

“A-ah! den I shust gifs you a lee-dle something as doos you mo’osh goot—ferry mo’osh goot.” I was too sunk in lassitude to observe what she did, but passively swallowed the contents of a liqueur-glass which she brought me.

I remember a delicious feeling, like sudden relief from great pain, following immediately after taking the dose—whatever it was. I have another, but subsequent, recollection of a state of exquisite repose, during which, like the fitful creations of a dream, unknown people came, moved about me, and spoke in whispers without conveying to my understanding anything intelligible, or, with one exception, producing surprise at their appearance. The exception was a person whom I seemed distinctly to recognise as a gentleman who had been in the habit of frequently coming to watch me at work while I was studying in the Alcazar at Seville, but with whom I had never exchanged a word. The dull astonishment with which I regarded him for being there grew duller every minute, until I became incapable of thinking about it—of thinking about anything;—rest!—only rest!

I came to myself as awakening from a sleep of many confused dreams. I was at my Newman Street apartments, lying in bed. I took for granted it was night; for a dull light, whose source was carefully screened from my eyes, just enabled one to distinguish objects and recognise the place. A hand, with its fingers upon my wrist, had hold of one of mine, and, peering anxiously at me, was the kind face of my dear friend Morris Blake, M.R.C.S.

"O blessed Moses, and ten times ten!" I heard him whisper softly to himself.

"Hollo, Morris!—is this you?"

"O Philliloo! So you're come up out o' that, eh? An' you know me—do you, Charley?"

"Know you, Morris!—why not?"

"Ah, why not?—that's it. Never mind now, though. Only be still and quiet—that's a good little man. Here's a dhrink for you."

I was parched with thirst, and tried to rise to take the effervescing draught he was mixing—I could not lift my head from the pillow.

It would be to no purpose describing my condition. Thanks to Blake's skill, under the Almighty's favour, I was past the crisis of brain-fever. Still, the greatest care, with quiet above all things, was necessary for my safety and restoration. Blake was to take me into the country as soon as I was strong enough to bear the journey.

Meanwhile he resolutely refused to answer any of my inquiries, as well as permission for me to speak a word, except about common and immediate things.

"Be good, now, Charley, my man," he said, in his way. "By-en'-by we'll want discoorse over our liquer an' dhudeens, when I exhibit 'bacca and punch for tonics. You may fire away thin like a debatin' society."

We had been together nearly a month at the foot of Box Hill, in the pleasant vale of Dorking, before Blake, while "exhibiting" the above tonics for his own behoof, but rigidly forbidding them to me, thought proper to remove all restrictions from our perfect freedom of conversation.

"After puttin' out o' sight, in twelve hours, three pounds o' mutton-chops, an' siven impariel pints o' bitter beer, Charley—you gourmong; besides flinging twice up to the top o' the hill like a shammy kid with a flee in his ear, I think I may take you Co. in any agreeable sort o' discoorse we likes now. What was the dhrink you'd been havin' the night you was brought home?"

It was only by an effort that I could recall the circumstances. "Drink, Morris!" I replied; "I took nothing but a little claret-and-water."

"Don't you call to mind gettin' dhrunk?"

"I!—drunk?"

"Dhrunk."

"No," I indignantly protested; "drunk, indeed!

I was very ill, but drank nothing—oh, I remember now——"

"Ha, ha ! What, Charley ?"

"Only a liqueur-glass of something that was given me when I was fainting."

"I'd just like to know what company you was kapin'—wid your black females an' princesses—for they hocussed you, Charley."

"Good heavens, Blake ! what do you mean ?"

"Just that. The men that brought you home, an' tucked you away in your crib, said you'd brought on a fit o' blinking at dinner, by lookin' too hard at the decanters — the bla-guards ! Was you robbed ?"

"Robbed—nonsense !"

"You wasn't ? I thought, though, we'd find you cleaned out o' every scurrick, till we seen you'd got money an' your watch upon you. Here's a parcel they left. I'd have giv it you before, only there's something so mighty mysterious on it, that if you hadn't had a brain-fever it ought to give you one anyhow, sure !"

Blake produced a small weighty parcel covered with strong brown paper, and firmly bound round with pack-thread ; but before handing it to me, he read from a label pasted across one side—the characters Roman, in red ink—

"REMEMBER YOUR WORD—HONOUR. FORGET EVERYTHING—SILENCE."

"It's mighty like one of the scrawls they hould up to the audience at Astley's," he added, reflectively. "'He dies at sunrise.' I've seen that same myself."

Meanwhile, in considerable agitation, I cut open the parcel. It contained two *rouleaux*, with seventy-five bright new sovereigns in each. I could not help muttering, as I remembered my black-veiled patroness, "You finds as vee vont pe vorsser as our pargains."

"Oh, thin, by Jabers!" exclaimed Morris, "there must be a ra'al royal princess in it to the fore, after all."

His astonishment surpassed mine. Naturally enough, he grew intensely inquisitive. In the wanderings of delirium I had revealed so much, that to tell him, from first to last, the whole story, was but to put in order the incidents, with every one of which he was already well acquainted. In his discretion, as well as in the soundness of his judgment, I could put the firmest reliance. Moreover, his keen insight into the characters of men, and his large acquaintance with the world, together with his affectionate friendship for myself, expressly calculated him to be my adviser, now I so urgently wanted counsel. For the mystery of the dead man's head had recurred to, and lay like a crime upon, my conscience — only the heavier for remembrance of my word pledged to secrecy, when by no possibility

could I have anticipated that it was given to conceal a fact so horribly suspicious. My mind was soon made up, and I recounted to him all my adventure. He listened without once interrupting me ; but I knew, by the fierce way he pulled at his pipe, that he was not a little excited.

"And now, Morris," I asked, when my tale was done, "what does it behove me to do?"

"Nothing," he answered, emphatically ; "beca'se, Charley, in the first place, as that respectable black female Trojan tould you, 'it's no business of yours ;' and, in the second, it would be of no use to try."

CHAPTER II.

I am in Rome, and between what I have told and am about to tell there is an interval of ten years. During that time, step by step, slowly at first, then rapidly, I had gone up the hill of public favour, and was now, for an artist, a rich man. Outwardly, my fate appeared all prosperity and content ; but my inner life was one of hopeless dreary pining, for no blood-boltered spectre of his victim ever haunted the slayer more persistently than all those years the form of the fair creature I had painted in her marvellous beauty — her impossible attainment haunted my imagination—my heart.

I had not, however, reposed all that time in

quiescent indifference ; but had set in motion, again and again, all the means I could devise and command to penetrate the mystery in which I had been involved ; but none had proved effective—all had failed—not the film of a clue could be discovered. It was well for me that I had the irrepressible instinct for art and art-work. I think—I know it saved me. It was a shelter from scorching passion, a defence against deadly despair ; a motive and a solace for which I was content to live on—without which I had been more than content to die.

A more than usually severe attack of my old nervous debility at the end of the season of '32, made a residence, for the ensuing winter, in a more genial climate, a necessity to my restoration. I spent some months in the south of France and at Nice ; and in the spring of the following year, just before Lent, came on to Rome.

It was not the first, by several, of my visits to the Eternal City. Here, besides my never-ending delight in its great works of art, I had the pleasure of renewing old and congenial friendships. On all previous occasions I had come to Rome to work ; now I was purposely idle, at least as far as brain or hand production went, for it was the only holiday I had ever given myself. The genial climates of France and Italy—the changes of scene—the repose from labour—the subdued excitement, without reaction, of contemplating the noble creations of art

—the view of majestic, if ruined, edifices, of gorgeous religious ceremonies,—varied by calm, almost melancholy, meditation in solemn churches, chapels, and the tranquil galleries of ancient palaces, rich not alone in the accumulated outpourings of genius, but with recollections, as well, of great men and greater events,—were influences that stirred to its depths the dead sea of sluggish grief, in which I had suffered all the germs of delight in my heart to lie sunken and buried; which aided my convalescence, and revived in my being capacities of happiness to which I had been insensible since the time of my strange adventure.

One of the alterative effects which the old morbid state had produced in my character was a shrinking and aversion from new acquaintances; above all, a dislike to be one in any promiscuous company. Lately I had so nearly succeeded in vanquishing both of these unreasonable feelings that I became a frequent visitor at the Greco;¹ and never refused nor hesitated now to use the introductions I had brought, or such as were proffered to me by my resident brother-artists and friends. It was another and a new delight to me wandering among the studios, as well as through the churches and galleries. Although it was not very obvious to myself then, I can well understand now, how great a

¹ The Café del Greco—the tavern in Rome where artists “most do congregate.”

change was, with unconscious rapidity, taking place in me. My mind was recovering elasticity enough to rebound against the tyranny of imagination, and often to assert the long-abandoned right of choosing her own subject of thought or fancy.

During a former visit to Rome, when once by chance at the Café Greco, I had become interested, at first through his appearance, and subsequently more deeply on obtaining a sketch of his character and history, in a Swiss, a painter, whom I saw there. He looked what he was, "a man weary with disaster, tugged with fortune;" one who at the beginning of his life had mistaken his vocation, and fallen into the fatal error of believing that inclination and aspiration were power and genius. Possessed in no small degree of intellect, perseverance, and many talents, he had not a spark of the divine fire which fuses these noble elements into forms that make their creator's name a living word upon the tongue of fame. When I first became acquainted with him he was old, and seemed like one who, having come forth out of the battle of life all scarred and worn, was resigned to dare the strife no more—to embrace content rather than wrestle with ambition—to play with cheerfulness instead of struggling to retain hope.

We had lately become close friends. I had got to love the man, and I think he liked me. One of the results of our friendship was an invitation to

visit his studio in an old palazzo, which was a regular burrow of artists, in the Piazza del Popolo. There was no difficulty in finding his atelier; for above it, at the sides, and beneath, were others occupied by men I knew, and the most part of whom I had visited. It was on the first morning after my return from an excursion of a few days among the Alban hills that I made my promised call. To my surprise, my knock elicited no reply from within; but instead, at the door of the adjoining "shop" appeared its tenant, my friend Conway Charters.

"Hollo! you? How goes it?" he said, while shaking my hand in the British manner. "You've been up to Adrian's villa, they tell me. Glorious among the hills at this time of year, isn't it? Want Stapfer?"

"Yes; he has asked me to see his paintings.

"He's gone off hurry-scurry to Zurich—he comes from Zurich, you know. There's some news—bad or good, we can't make out which from his manner, poor fellow!—there's some news from his sister."

"Well, I hope then it's good. How are you?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks! I've got Stapffy's key here; if you like to go in and look at his lot, I'll come to you in half an hour—my model's time's up soon."

There is no law more absolute than the one which decrees that he who upon no business interrupts an artist engaged with his model, is guilty

of impertinence; so, taking the key, I let myself into Stapfer's place. The history of his art-life might be read upon the walls at a glance. Abundant passages were written there, in his work, containing clear evidence of all the qualities but one which make a great artist; but as clearly to be read was the absence of that one—genius: his work was painted fire that warms not. Yet it was here, among his lifeless transcripts from breathing forms, that I found a work which stirred emotion in me to profounder depths than all the genius of past and present concentrated in one force could have done. Where the light fell fairest, in the middle of a compartment, hidden by the folds of a dingy green curtain, hung a picture by itself. Guessing from these circumstances that Stapfer regarded this as his *chef-d'œuvre*, with the desperate hope of finding something which, when I again saw him, I might conscientiously praise, I drew aside the cloth. My God! it was the Princess. Is time an entity? if so, what is memory? All I know is, that before that clay-coloured, expressionless effigy of my idea, my heart leaped back across the gulf in time of ten years, and throbbed with the same feeling it throbbed with then, the last time I stood in its living presence.

Rapt as a seer in his ecstasy, I had lost all sense of time present or things surrounding, when Charters's entrance recalled me to the perception of both.

"Ah," he said, "you couldn't please poor Stapffy more than by taking notice of that thing of his. He is either precious proud of his work, or else he was spoons upon his model. I rather think the last; for, queer as his painting is, you can make her out to be a splendid creature."

"You don't know, then, who she is?" I asked, holding my breath till he replied.

"No; he did it in Naples, and calls it 'La Principessa.'"

"In Naples! In Naples do you say? Do you know how long ago?"

"I think it has got a date somewhere—oh, here: 1823."

The same year that I painted her!

"And you really think he was in love with her?"

"Why, I only suppose so, because he won't sell the picture at any price; and we can always get a rise out of him by ever so little chaff about 'De BrinCESS,' as he Englishes it: a great shame, though—he's such a good old fellow!"

Conway Charters could tell me nothing more, except that letters *poste restante*, Zurich, would be sure to reach him.

On leaving the studio, I moved about all day like one in a troubled dream, with some formless purpose before him, some end to be achieved, for which he is doomed to struggle forward, though

with conscious disappointment of effort, and utter powerlessness in himself. It was not till after I had dined—under any circumstances one always dines, if he can get a dinner—that, aided by a little wine and a big smoke, the flood of my turmoiled thought subsided within the banks of reason ; the current, however, rushed but one way. I would—I must—discover this mysterious Princess ; and, but subordinate to that purpose, the other mysteries of the dead head, and why its picture and hers had been painted under such circumstances of determined secrecy. In my eagerness, had it been possible to start at the instant, I should have rushed off in person to Zurich to question Stapfer ; but a little reflection showed me that I might frustrate their object by making my inquiries unduly important, besides betraying feelings which I shrunk from exposing to any one else. I therefore wrote, but in very guarded language ; and, taking the hint from what Charters had said, laid the trouble which I was giving him upon the interest with which his picture had inspired me.

The letter despatched, I was again, perforce, left to all the nervous irritability of suspense. Occupy myself as I would, do what I could, while waiting a reply, my imagination never left to be ablaze, trying to light up the obscurity into which the feeble clue, which I had at last laid hold on, seemed to lead, and to suggest romantic circum-

stances enough to form the groundworks of a whole circulating library. At last Stapfer's answer came. What infinite pains, in his good-nature, he must have taken to translate—evidently by the continuous help of a dictionary—what he had to say, out of his native German into English—English execrably worse than that he usually spoke! I need only transcribe those passages that referred to the subject on which I had addressed him, and which determined my next proceedings. I give them literally:—

"I have myself a delight out of it made 'La Principessa' to paint. I can it me never over the heart bring it to bargain. It do me much sorrow if you a particular wish cherish the picture to possess. I have it in Naple paint. La Principessa is there establish. She live to the Lavinaio nel Quartiere Mercato. Ach! It is long ago since I she see have."

This information was satisfactory only on the point of where she lived when he painted her picture. Why had he not mentioned her name? there might be, probably were, dozens of princesses in Naples. Suppose she had removed since then—how was I to find this particular princess with no other note of her identity than that she was a princess? "Ah!" sighed I, as poor Stapfer had done, "this princess is distinguished from all other princesses by such beauty! I will try it, however;

anything—above all, action—is better a million-fold than such heartaching restless nights and suspense-fretted days.

Suddenly an unthought of but mighty obstacle rose up between me and my purpose. Beyond the ordinary phrases to be picked out of a vocabulary, I knew no Italian. I saw at once that I must decide between making a confidant of a strange cicerone, or of a friend. In twenty minutes I was at Charters's studio.

"You are strong in Italian, are not you?" I asked.

"Spare my blushes ; yes," he replied.

"Do you think they would puzzle you at Naples?"

"What ! in talking ?—no. In doing they might, confoundedly."

"You've been there?"

"Twice."

"Should you like to go again?"

"I mean to."

"When?"

"When the gods are conformable, and I sell a picture or two."

In ten minutes' additional conversation I prevailed on Conway to become my companion, and succeeded in overbearing all excuses for delay, even that of getting his linen home from the *lavan-daria* ; and, as a further result, the next morning, at a few minutes after seven, seated opposite each

other in a *vetturino*, we were jogging along the Appian Way towards the Pontine Marshes on the old Terracina road.

Naples ! The road thereto and the sights thereat ; the city, the places nigh ; the bay, the coast, the islands, the skies, *the* mountain ;—to do none of these had I come : to journals, guide-books, prints, and panoramas I leave them. Naples had for me a greater interest than itself. Was I, at the Hotel Crocelle, within—perhaps—a stone's cast of the living lady whose image had haunted me so many years ! Might not the caressing air which I breathed have passed from her lips to mine ! How my querulous heart yearned and grew faint at such fancies !

I had told Charters the object of my sudden journey, and the difficulty I anticipated in attaining it ; but at the same time, while freely confessing that it was connected with a story and a mystery, I had explained how a promise bound me to keep both concealed. He had accepted my explanation as frankly as I gave it, like the good fellow and gentleman he was.

"Oh, we won't hear anything about difficulty. Let us begin asking at once. Here !" he shouted to a waiter. "Look in my face ; there is a principessa—something—lives in the Lavinaio nel Quartiere Mercato : we have forgotten her name—what is it ?"

The query seemed to galvanise the man ; his eyebrows went up, and his lower jaw down, with an expression of extremest surprise ; and, in a way very unlike his usual Neapolitan liveliness, he gasped out—

“Una principessa ?”

“What do you mean?—don’t you know anything about her ?”

“Signori, it is impossible ; only very wretched people live in the Lavinaio.”

Charters and I looked at one another. “Ah,” I said, “there must be some mistake.”

“Si, signori, certamente.”

Stumbling thus at the very threshold of our search was very disheartening ; but Conway, with a promptness to which I could lay no claim, proposed that we should sally forth at once.

“Let us out and scout for ourselves,” he said ; “we can look any plan in the face afterwards with a chance of guessing what change we ought to get out of it.”

I eagerly assented, for nothing could be so intolerable as inaction. The direction given by Stapfer was to a part of the city so little known and so unexplorable by strangers, that, to discover and penetrate its recesses, we had to place ourselves under the guidance of an ancient cicerone, an old acquaintance of Charters, whom, to the

palpable disgust of our *garzone* at the Crocelle, he insisted upon having fetched from the Grand Bretagne.

"He is the prince of ciceroni," Conway explained to me; "he is the only southern Italian I ever knew that can hold his tongue—that cuts his story short when you have had enough of it, tells you only what you want to know, and knows it when you want him to tell it."

Pioneered by this accomplished individual, in the diminishing light of a southern evening, we started on our quest for the nameless princess. We were more reserved towards our cicerone Pinto than we had been to the waiter, directing him only to lead us to the Lavinaio nel Quartiere Mercato. Crossing the Piazza Castello and the Marinella, we plunged into a maze of ill-lighted narrow streets, walled in by lofty houses, loftier churches, and monastic buildings; the former of which, as we advanced further, became meaner in character, with signs of indigence, — within, seen through open windows and doors—without, marked by such accessories as dirty, half-naked children, and by more squalid-looking men and women. It was evidently one of the "slums" of Naples into which we had got; when, opposite a passage between the houses ascending to higher ground beyond, Pinto, who was preceding us, stopped, and pointing at this entrance, to our profound mortification, exclaimed—

“Eccola ! zare ees it.”

Brought up suddenly thus, Charters and I turned to each other in blank surprise. As we caught one another's looks, our disappointment seemed to strike us both from such a ludicrous point of view that, deep as my feelings really were, excited as I had become—perhaps owing to this excitement casually diverted, I know not—but I joined him in an explosion of laughter which vexed my soul, but only became the more obstreperous for the vexation. The idea of the exquisitely-refined and lovely being I had painted—a graceful dignified princess, too—existing among the squalor of such a scene—it was too absurd ! What could Stapfer mean by sending me to such a spot ? it must be a lapse of memory—a mistake in name ! Whatever it was, I indicated to my companions the abandonment of all hope to find the object of my search in that locality, by returning at once, without remark or inquiry, the way we had come.

Arrived at our hotel, accompanied by Signor Pinto, I presently had occasion to appreciate the judgment with which Charters had selected him from all other ciceroni. He sat quite silent, though it was soon seen how observant, while we spoke hastily and despondingly of our disappointment. By the time we paused he seemed to have perfectly made out our purpose and difficulty.

“Ah ha ! signori,” he said, “you look-a fore som-a

von-a? You no-a find-a he'em, you tell-a me—I find-a he'em, eef he be in Na'pli."

"Of course you will!" shouted Charters, enthusiastically; "you're just the fellow! I say, tell him about the Princess—he knows lots of people that can help him. Only, dash it! you must make it worth his while—say a trifle for his time, and something handsome if he succeeds: you don't mind stumping up, eh? Is that your view of things, too, Signor Pinto?"

"Ya-es, ya-es, sare; per-hap-a I mose go-a many people, an' I mose stump-a too."

I assented with all my heart to the plan thus suddenly started; indeed no other even glimmered out of the deep obscurity of the subject. The terms for his assistance were soon arranged, infinitely to Signor Pinto's satisfaction. In return—and he undertook this with a confidence which astonished Charters and myself—he was to discover the Princess who sat to Stapfer ten years ago, and obtain her history—actually her parentage, birth, title, education, fortune, and all relating to her while she remained on Neapolitan territory; moreover, if she were still within its bounds, he was to carry me where I might see her, and assure myself that it was the veritable person to whom his information applied.

"I'll tell you what," Conway said when Pinto had left, "I'm blest if he isn't in the police! I

never thought of it before. Every two out of three in Naples are spies upon the odd man—that's it !”

Pitting action against irksomeness of suspense, under Charters's guidance, I employed the next day in an excursion to Baiæ. On our return, late at night, we found Pinto at our hotel. There was a look of conscious success about him that at once raised in us the highest hopes, though, to both my simple and Charters's boisterous demands, he steadily refused information.

“Eef you have-a only a lee-tle *bozzetto*, you call-a a skitz-a, eet sall do mosh-a help-a ?”

“A sketch, eh ? Will to-morrow morning do ?—we are dead tired to-night.”

“O ya-es, ya-es, ya-es ! eet sall do ver well-a. I come-a to your-a brick-a-fast-a.”

Our hopes sprang higher yet, when, next morning, we observed Pinto's eyes glisten and his thin lips curl into an assured smile, as he keenly regarded the sketch I had just made. Still he refused to utter a word for our satisfaction ; yet there was something very significant in the way he addressed us on leaving.

“Perhap-a, signori, you go volk-a wis-a me in ze mornin' zu-morrow ? Eef-a you-a stay here-a, I sall come-a in ze mornin'.”

Conway smacked his hands together with a report like a pistol. “My mother was a frau, and

my father a mynheer, if we aren't within a day and a half of a discovery now, eh?" he said.

I could not help agreeing with him, or else Pinto was deluding us with false hopes by false looks; as that, however, could in no way be worth his while, we determined to believe in next day.

That next day I sprang up, hopelessly wide awake, hours before my usual time, and I was usually an early riser. Thoughts, the combination of fear and expectation, seemed to sting rather than soothe me. I gave it up, after the first endeavour to swallow at breakfast. As little could I sit still, or bear companionship—even that of Charters. I felt as if I should choke within walls, and retired with my cigar to the balcony, where, for what appeared a double morning, I paced restlessly to and fro, to the intense amusement, I believe, of several heaps of idlers, who, from carefully-selected positions, speculated upon my actions to the confirmation of their previous general impressions, that "gl' Inglesi sono quasi tutti pazzi."

At last! A *cittadina* stops. Ha! it is Pinto. A moment after he is with us, and invites us to accompany him.

I suppose it is very foolish, but I can't help it. All my life long it has been the same with me: at any sudden excitement, or at its culmination, however prepared, my heart, after giving one wild bound, seems to stand still, and a deadly faintness

ensues. All this occurred now. But Charters, prompt in all things, mastered the situation in a moment, by thrusting a liqueur-bottle, to its shoulders, into my mouth with one hand, and with the other dabbling me with iced water—which ran down inside my neckcloth—till I was gasping from two causes at once. I observed, while recovering, that he prudently put the maraschino-flask in his pocket.

Pinto did not follow us into the carriage, but took a seat upon the perch beside the driver, manifestly to elude the torrent of questions I, or certainly Conway, would have poured upon him. We drove at a fast pace for quite half an hour, when stopping at Mergellina, at the foot of Posilipo, Pinto descended, requested us to do so, and proposed—

“You please-a volk-a a lee-tle-a vay wees me, a-a-ha, signori.”

Resolutely shaking his head in silent reply to Charters’s rapid interrogatories, he preceded us up a narrow lane, bordered on each side at intervals by wretched tumble-down patched-up houses—each, however, with a luxuriant garden. I refrain from describing my sensations while, as I believed, approaching the solution of the great mystery of my life, except that wild astonishment at the possibility of finding it in such a neighbourhood rose high above all others. My heart beat so thickly that I had to pause twice during the ascent and avail

myself of Conway's support, as well as of the prudential little item out of his pocket. We had gained a considerable elevation. The lane almost lost the character of one, and had become more like a half-marked path. The huts were more scattered, smaller, and meaner in appearance than those we had passed, and all the people whom we saw were of the *marinari* or *lazzaroni* class. Still, looking around on each side, and further, further on, nowhere was an indication of any such place as might enshrine my peerless lady visible. At the foot of a sharp pitch that arose in our front, above which on one side we could see the tiles of a hut, I was pausing again, breathless and in bewildered perplexity, and to cool my forehead in a tiny runnel of water that here came singing down beside the bare track to which our path had dwindled: Pinto had not stopped, but, having climbed the hill, was pausing in an attitude of unmistakable, self-complacent, dignified triumph upon the summit, leaning one hand upon a broken wall, with the other gracefully posed upon his breast, his head erect and slightly averted—as if he were standing to have his picture painted.

"What can he mean?" both Charters and I exclaimed at once, rushing up to his side.

"Eccola!" he shouted, very coolly taking a pinch of snuff, facing round towards the hut, waving an arm in the air, and letting it fall in a straight line,

pointing in the same direction—"Ecco la principessa !"

Leaning against a stony ridge, over which the little rill tumbled in a tiny cataract and rushed away in a hollow it had worn at the side of the path, there was before us, at a dozen yards from the track where we were standing, a low cabin, with no upper storey, made of wood and clay, and with a few squared but irregular stones built in at the corners and in courses along the base of the walls ; these last having projecting offsets thrust out from them at the sides, evidently to enlarge the room within as circumstances made further space necessary ; the whole covered with broken tiles. A low wall, like a bank, of earth and stones, seemingly held together by the ivy that grew luxuriantly on both its sides, enclosed one margin of a grassy plot in front ; the other being bounded by the rocky cliff against which the structure rested, and which was evidently part of an old quarry, whose excavation had left the level ground whereon the cabin stood. Approaching we had heard the merry laughter and shrill cries of children romping ; and, contrasting those reckless noises, the voice of another child singing with lovely tones a melody like a cradle-song—slow and long drawn out, and sweet and soothing as the wash of a calm sea on its sands. But when we reached the side of Pinto, all had become hushed. The children—two sturdy

little fellows of four and six, a small girl of three, another of eight or nine, singing to sleep a drowsy *bambino* lying on the moss of the bank at her side — awed at the sudden appearance of strangers, stopped, spell-struck, in the midst of their play, and gazed at us with wide-open eyes. Beyond, beside the door, in the shade of a rude trellised porch tendrilled with a vine, sat a female, her face turned from us, with busy fingers occupied in weaving a net. Her head and bosom were covered with the ordinary *fazzoletto*, and she wore only the short skirt of the women of Naples, which, as she sat, revealed the bare legs and naked feet. Strange! — neither the cessation of the children's noisy play, Pinto's loud exclamation, nor our presence, seemed to have aroused her attention; for still she continued to push and jerk her shuttle, and keep her head averted, low over her work. While I stood, looking and speechless — a good deal of indignation mixing with my astonishment — Signor Pinto maintained such an air of conceited complacency and self-plaudation, opposed to my utter disappointment, that I felt much more inclination to kick him than to ask for an explanation. But as I advanced to resolve the faint shade of doubt that must necessarily have remained if the woman's face were unseen, the youngest child, perhaps alarmed at my approach, sprang to her and clutched her dress. — The mother turned her head

and gazed at me. One look into those wonderful, wistful eyes—yes, it is the Princess ! Utterly forgetting in my agitation all things but that she was before me, I asked—

“Do you remember me ?”

The wistful eyes caught the fact of my speaking, but turned from my face to that of her eldest child, who had come to her side. It was the young girl who, in her Neapolitan dialect, answered—

“Mammà non ci sente, e non parla.”

Why should I not tell ? I made a sign to Charters, and rushed away up the hill, till alone and unseen ; then I wept, as men with loving hearts weep, when hope seems rudely parted from their lives for ever.

In the evening of that day I received from Pinto a neatly-written document, quite official in character. I append Charters’s translation :—

(SERAFINA PAGANO)

“Born at the Piano Sorrento, 1805. Deaf and dumb. Left Sorrento, 1820. Lived subsequently in Naples, Florence, and Rome. Became a model for statuary and painters, by whom she was known as ‘La Principessa.’ Married, 1823, Bartolomeo Starace, *marinaro*, in Naples. Domiciled in Naples since 1823. Of good character.”

On the day but one after, by arrangement through

Pinto, she came to our hotel, accompanied by her husband, a thick-set, bandy-legged, but exceedingly good-natured-looking fellow, and her eldest girl. The child was our medium of communication. How, by motion of hands and fingers and lips, and by gestures, she translated, almost as rapidly as uttered, our words into meanings; and how, in a similar manner, they were replied to by her mother and understood by her,—was something so marvellous that I abstain from any attempt to describe what could only be credited by seeing.

"Yes, she remembered me now. She did not know the name nor the rank of the lady I had seen her with. She had been engaged at Florence by a 'milord,' through Signor Andreoli the statuary, to travel with him and 'miladi:' 'miladi' was the veiled personage I had seen. She was not always veiled—only in the studio. She did not know the reason, and had never thought about it. 'Milord' was *un galantuomo*, and fabulously rich. They had crossed the sea; but she did not know it was to England: had never before now heard of a place called London. I was the only artist to whom, during her engagement, she had sat. The dead head? It had not struck her as anything extraordinary; she knew nothing about it but that it was there. She remembered seeing from the window a funeral that left the house soon after her arrival; it had impressed her deeply by its differ-

ence in character from a funeral in her own country. Signor Andreoli was dead—he was dying when she left Florence. Nothing could exceed the kindness with which she had been treated, nor the generosity with which she had been remunerated. ‘Miladi’ herself had accompanied her back, not to Florence, but to Naples. It was her own wish to return to Naples, as they had made her rich enough to marry Bartolomeo. She had never seen them since.”

That was all. Obligated to make use, so far, of Charters, I resolved to do more, and I confided to him the whole affair. This discovery of my beautiful model in “La Principessa” knocked its greatest element of romance out of my story; but it left what remained only the more difficult to analyse into motives and objects. What did it all mean? How we guessed and guessed! How we exasperated ourselves with wild surmisings! knowing perfectly well all the time how utterly useless it all was.

“I tell you what, my fine fellow,” said Conway to me, at the same time thrusting all his fingers up through his hair, “it won’t do to have any more of this. Instead of being driven frantic, it will be a thousand times better to distract ourselves. I vote for San Carlo this evening; to-morrow we’ll have Pinto here. Get upon quite another horse, and send this ten-year-old mystery back to Old Nick, who must have been its breeder.”

I could do no better than follow Conway's lead. So we went to San Carlo, and next day set to work—as Englishmen usually do—seriously to enjoy ourselves. In a fortnight we went back to Rome. A week later I returned to England, nearly oblivious of my pet mystery, anticipating no further revelations, or—if expectation lurked anywhere out of sight in my mind—certainly not dreaming that I should come upon them where and how I did, nor that they would prove such odd things as they ultimately turned out to be.

CHAPTER III.

That arch of Time's bridge where you, reader, and I last parted was 1833; this, where we meet again, is numbered 1850. My waistcoats now, measured round from the bottom button, are twice as capacious as at the top. It is seventeen years since I was freed from one enchantment, and fifteen years since I fell victim to another. My wife's name is Helen—Nelly in affection, when she is amiable and I in a mood to appreciate it. My eldest boy is at Rugby; and I hope he will prove himself worthy of all I have spent and am about to spend upon him. I mention these things, and, in addition, introduce the fact that there are six others, differing in gender, between him and baby—all

pushing themselves up to that stand-point in life from whence, doubtless, they will assert similar claims—to show that there can be little of my early romance left in me : so little, in fact, that I believe I never once thought about that old pet adventure of mine from the time when, one evening; sitting beside my young wife, who was preparing for bed our little Charley—the Rugby boy now—and showing me how beautifully the cherub, supported under his arm-pits by her tender hands, could walk from her knee right up to her neck—I told her the whole story, my foolish feelings and all, upon the great principle that married folk should have no secrets—no, not in their hearts—from each other,—till a little while ago, when the tide of concealment, which had remained at flood for twenty - seven years, ebbed suddenly away, and left my mystery stranded high and dry—its shabby tail exposed to open comparison with its awful head and its front of dreadful fascination.

The London season was just over, when I went with my wife on a visit to her father, the incumbent of a country parish far down in one of our south-western counties. He had lately been presented to his living, on the death of its previous occupier, by an old college friend, the Viscount Bricbrakmont, to whom, when not much older than his pupil, he had been tutor. His lordship's seat was the show-place of the neighbourhood for its magnificent gal-

lery of old masters, his collection of prints, and objects of *vertu*. It had, besides, the further recommendation to the two old friends of being within a couple of miles of the Rectory. The Viscount, on the early death of his children, followed immediately by that of their mother, had found for his great sorrow distraction in making these collections. His having no near relations, and his being the possessor of enormous wealth, seemed justifications of an almost fabulous expenditure to gratify by acquisition these æsthetic tastes—the only ones out of which he had derived consolation, and which, under his bereavement, in the absence of all other objects of interest, had become in him, so to speak, intense passions.

As soon as the Rector came to his new living, the friends—both aged men now—resumed, to the manifest gratification of each, the habits of companionship which had been interrupted only by divergence of their paths in life when they left college for the great world. The leisure of each was spent with the other. The Rector, when he had time, went to "The Place;" the Viscount, when he had nothing to do, came to the Rectory. It thus happened that, the day after our arrival, at luncheon, we had the honour of being presented to his lordship. And it also happened that his lordship, who talked incessantly—in that charming anecdotal way which, I am afraid, we must reckon now among

the lost arts—had so much burdening his mind, unsaid, about pictures, artists, and connoisseurs, that he accepted with avidity an invitation to return to dinner, “that he might,” as he assured his hostess, “in addition to the usual *agrémens* of her table, enjoy the delightful conversation of her guest.”

At and after dinner his lordship’s flow of anecdote was unebbing. He had great pride in his success as a collector. Many of his best stories were of the way in which he himself, or some other enthusiast, had hit the scent of some *chef-d’œuvre*, had followed it up, and eventually run it down. He introduced one such by asking me if I had known the late Baron Mordecai.

“I have seen him often,” I replied, “but had no acquaintance with him.”

“Ah, I who knew him, regret, for your sake, your not having known him. He was one of the most extraordinary men I ever met—a Napoleon in his way. All the qualities out of which greatness is made he possessed—acuteness, energy, decision, unflinching perseverance. His knowledge of the old masters surpassed that of any other living man. We owe to him the recovery of many lost pictures, some the finest that have ever been painted—as, for instance, the great Murillo in my collection; I obtained it of him.”

“Indeed !”

“Yes ; I’ll tell you all about it. It was formerly

in the *sacristia* of the Convento de la Merced at Seville, but disappeared in 1811, during the French occupation under Soult. It was supposed to have been carried with the other art-treasures of Spain to France. But remark!—it never turned up at Paris; and the walls of the Louvre were innocent of being receivers of, at least, that particular piece of sto—; well, spoil. To those who knew the work, it was always a subject of profound regret that such a masterpiece of Murillo should be, as so many other great creations of genius were, lost to the world, through the barbarous rapacity of Buona-parte and his generals. No man could entertain deeper feelings upon the subject than Baron Mordecai. When I first knew him, early in 1823, his indignation was as vehement and his grief as acute as if the spoliation and the loss, instead of happening so many years before, had but just occurred, and affected himself personally. But these feelings probably originated in the circumstance, as he told me, of his having come, while in Spain, from whence he was but just returned, upon traces of three or four pictures, and deluding himself for a considerable time with ecstatic hopes that among them was this identical lost 'Murillo de la Merced.' These traces began in his obtaining a unique, but unfortunately mutilated, etching of the missing picture, and the being assured that in the set of paintings he had mentioned, and which was in the

possession of certain parties at Cordova, would be found the original. It was like the man to rush off at once to Cordova, but he arrived there only to encounter a blank disappointment. Of pictures he could hear nothing ; and the persons to whom he was directed had gone away, no one knew where, years before. Such was exactly the position for Baron Mordecai's fine qualities to come out to the front. Any one else but he would have abandoned the pursuit ; but having reason, as he supposed, to rely upon the information he had received, he became only more determined. Himself obliged to return to England, before leaving Spain he set agencies at work to discover the lost track, which extended operations even to Russia and America.

"A few months subsequently, when his late acquisitions arrived from abroad, he showed me the etching of the lost gem. I had all along felt a real sympathy with him and his object ; but now, when I saw this, so to call it, promissory-note of the priceless hidden treasure, I confess my interest in its discovery sharpened into an eagerness quite as keen as his own. For three long years, though several times our hopes were greatly excited by intelligence from his agents abroad, or by his own exertions in following up some fancied clue, of which he always wrote me the details, we arrived at nothing but disappointment.

"At length, however, in the summer of '26, a

letter came from Gibraltar, informing the Baron that there had been found at Ossuña some paintings, certainly brought there a long time before from Cordova, which in many particulars corresponded to those he was in search of. They were at once secured by his agent, who had, moreover, succeeded in getting them down to the frontier, and smuggling them across the lines of San Roche into Gibraltar, whence, at the first opportunity, they would be despatched to London.

"These were not the times of regular steam communication by which we could, as now, calculate almost to an hour when our suspense would be relieved. I daresay you would all laugh at us if I were to describe the worse than fidgety state of excitement we were in; and how, day by day, it grew more exasperating; and how—when at last the vessel arrived and unloaded, and the case of pictures, cleared at the custom-house, was put into a cart, with the Baron's own servant as guard—we ordered our carriage to move close behind it, that we might never lose sight of the precious box; and how, when we got it home, although the Baron's assistants—any number of times more expert—were standing there all ready, yet we must take mallets and chisels, and ourselves prise off the lid, and drag forth to the light the expected long-lost treasure. Well, you are kind enough not to laugh; but I, one of the actors in that scene, cannot help

doing so now, although at the time I felt almost as much as the Baron, who actually cried with rage and disappointment when we took from the case the last of the four pictures it contained—all of a quality, ‘such as,’ the Baron said, throwing his mallet at them, ‘I could fill Grosvenor Square with for two guineas apiece.’ Thus ended our hopes, and with them all further efforts on our parts, to find the great ‘Murillo de la Merced;’—but there is a finish to the story!

“As he almost always had some pictures of mine to restore, and I took vast interest in the processes, I got into a habit of spending a great deal of my leisure in the Baron’s atelier. It was about two years after our Murillo disappointment that two pictures in his possession attracted my notice. Upon inquiry, I was astonished to learn that they belonged to those we had, in our aggravation, so hastily condemned. The Baron candidly admitted that the unexpected defeat to his hopes had made him unjust to their merit. Having thrown them aside as worthless, he had refrained, till a little while before, from looking at them again; but upon a calmer investigation, he had discovered that, though by no means of the highest class, they were well worth the pains of restoration. He only hoped the others would turn out as well—they were in hand—his assistant there was at work on one of them now. At that moment this very assistant,

rubbing away at the picture indicated, uttered a sudden cry, actually with something so like horror in its tone as to greatly startle us both. At a glance we discovered the cause of his fright. An angular piece of colour, as large as a crown-piece, had broken bodily away from the painting under his fingers. It was perhaps well that I was present, or I fear Baron Mordecai would not have restrained himself to the epithets and expletives he hurled at the poor fellow's head. The man wisely rushed from his incensed master's presence, and vanished. It was some time before the Baron recovered temper enough to scrutinise coolly the injury done.

"'Mein himmel!' he exclaimed, in his native German, as he did so, 'what is here? It is all loose—see!' He was dabbing the surface near the hole with his fingers. 'How—what is this? Ach, Gott!' He uttered a cry, as his man had done; for, as he pressed, another flake larger than the former fractured off. As if struck with a sudden thought, he stood for a moment to consider; then, in positively a frantic manner, after glaring at and tossing right and left the tools near him, he began shouting, 'Hi! hi! hi! Come here instantly—hi there! Here, come here! Ach!' he went on, as the frightened face of his workman appeared at the door, 'bring a paper-knife,—your mistress—ask her for hers. And, hi!—some hot water in a bucket; and, ha!—a sponge—a large one. Quick—make

haste—hi! this moment!’ ‘Gott in himmel!’ I heard him say to himself, as he pressed his hand to his forehead.

“I really feared his reason was upset. My presence seemed quite forgotten. After a moment he bent down over the fracture, and began rubbing with his forefinger in the hole, muttering all the while to himself something, of which I could only make out detached phrases.

“‘They often did it—they have done it very often. No concealment so sure! Mein himmel! No way so safe!—covered—hid in this way—why I never guessed it. If—if only—if it should—Gott!—a million!—worth a million! I—I—I beg your pardon, my lord,’ he said, recovering himself, and looking round confusedly, as his assistant brought him a paper-knife and a large bowl of hot water. ‘I pray forgive me. I forgot everything but this; what do you imagine I think it is?’

“‘I cannot guess, of course.’

“‘I think it is a picture *in tempera*, painted over another picture—and if so, a fine one be sure—to hide it. It has been done many times, especially in Spain. What—what if?—nonsense though!—but if? Ah, I don’t dare hope that—but—I will soon see.’

“He appeared to nerve himself as a surgeon does who is about to perform a difficult operation. Indeed he looked not unlike one as, tucking up his

sleeves and steadying his hand, he proceeded cautiously to insert the blade of the knife under the edge of the fractured colour. It peeled up bit by bit. Then he applied the sponge and washed the surface—for there was another surface below—and it revealed brilliant colour. He seemed not able to control himself, but burst out in a short triumphant sort of shout. Again, setting his teeth and compressing his lips, he worked on with knife and sponge; while I, breathless and excited to positive pain, stood by watching the progress he made, till, piece by piece, in little or large flakes, the whole of the superincumbent painting *in tempera* lay like broken plaster on the floor; and fresh, vivid, in all its glorious harmony of colour, design, expression, Murillo's greatest, matchless picture was revealed to us, perfect as the day he painted it."

"Grand! grand!" I exclaimed. "And it is now in your lordship's possession?"

"Yes. It was long, though, before I could induce Baron Mordecai to part with it. I obtained it at last as a favour for thirteen thousand guineas. He parted with it with very great reluctance; and three months after wanted it back again for fifteen thousand. When I refused, he bid again and again up to twenty thousand; he wanted to take it to St Petersburg. Of course no money could buy it—no amount of money. When will you come and see it?"

"Your lordship is very kind—when shall you be at leisure?"

"I? Oh, whenever you will come. In the morning? say, early in the morning; and we can have a long gossip about that and the other things I have got together. And, madam," he said, addressing my gracious mother-in-law, "perhaps you, and all of yours here, will do me the honour to come to luncheon?"

So it was arranged.

I found his lordship next morning pacing the terrace in front of the house, eagerly expecting me. He at once led the way to his gallery. There are few things I more delight in than wandering through a collection—pausing here, glancing there; studying carefully the handling of this master; dodging to get the right point of view, to take in all the effect of that; but, mind you, by myself. There are few things I find more wearisome than being led up to one *chef-d'œuvre*; stationed "just here" to look at a second; dragged away "to tell an opinion" of a third, or to extol "the fine quality of breadth" in a fourth, and—of all objectionable *ciceroni*—by the *dilettante* proprietor himself. He always has in his own mind, with regard to every one of them, foregone conclusions, against which the expression of an independent opinion is nearly sure to clash, and offend, as well, his *amour propre*. Hour after hour was I subjected to such a purgatory

on this occasion. Not but that his lordship's collection was really a good one, not but that his lordship was a most delightful guide through it, but—"he was monarch of all I surveyed." Inevitably, under such a condition, the power of ownership makes itself felt, if not expressed; submission seems expected, if not demanded; and admiration is called for as a tax imposed, instead of being yielded of freewill to merit for itself.

By the time we had made the circuit of the great gallery, I was so thoroughly jaded that I should have hailed as the greatest relief the appearance of the party from the Rectory, or the sound of the luncheon-bell; but no, there was yet more to see—the Viscount's cabinet of gems and the Murillo.

"It is here," his lordship said, pausing, and playing with the handle of the door before he opened it. "I built this room on purpose for it. If I were Aladdin, the genius should construct a palace on purpose, and my Murillo should occupy the place of the Roc's egg. Enter."

I entered. There was but one picture on the walls. Placed opposite to it, at the best point of view, was a *fauteuil*. The Viscount followed me close, as I advanced to the front. Whether he expected me to utter an exclamatory shout of delight, or pour out broken expressions of rapture, or make any other exhibition of intense feeling, I

know not. Apparently he quite approved of the effect the first glance of the picture produced upon me, which was, simply, causing me to sink down overpowered, upon the seat so happily placed for one in my condition.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, ecstatically, patting me on the shoulder; “I see—I see! I expected no less. I will leave you to yourself. There are states of pleasure when the presence of another is an intrusion, as much as it is in certain states of grief. You will find me in the gallery.”

I am afraid I stared wildly at his lordship as he receded on tiptoe through the door, and then stared no less wildly at the picture before me.

As I live, it was my own painting of Salome and John the Baptist’s head!

Beneath it, framed and glazed, hung the etching that the Viscount had mentioned, fully lettered:—

“Pintado por Murillo.” “Grabado por Juan Ant^o. Salvador Carmona.” “El Quadro original existe en la Sacristia del Convento de la Merced, en Sevilla.”

I knew the name of Carmona as being the engraver of many of Murillo’s pictures. The paper on which it was printed, like the painting, had been made to undergo processes that had given to both the aspect and mellowness of age.

My life has been so on one side of the wicked world—so apart from, so unreachd by, its knav-

eries, cunnings, and frauds—that all my notions of villany are ideal rather than real. Perhaps, too, I am what nowadays is expressively called “jolly green”—meaning, I take it, slow at suspicion; but I could not sit there looking at my own handiwork, with the Viscount’s narrative fresh in my mind, and for one moment doubt that he had been made the victim of a cool, calculating, deliberately contrived, marvellously worked-out, gigantic swindle.

In the time I had for reflection, I could only arrive at a settled conviction of the fact, and at two resolutions: the first one being, to keep for the present my own counsel; the next, not to rest till I had found out the mystery of that blood-drained head—for all the horrible ideas connected with it were now rendered a hundredfold more cogent by my reflections suggesting that those who had so little hesitation in employing all means needful for or accessory to their purpose, could have had no scruple in resorting even to murder.

When I rejoined the Viscount, I had little difficulty in avoiding discussion, simply by looking intelligent and assentive; while he poured forth his own inexhaustible rapture of admiration of the work, and exultation at being its possessor. The next day I went back to London.

I had elicited from his lordship the two or three facts I required—the address of the late Baron Mordecai, that his relict survived, and that she still

occupied their residence at Highgate. I had made up my mind to a certainty that in the Baroness I should discover my old patroness, the black-veiled duenna. Immediately upon my arrival in town I called upon my old friend, confidant, and counsellor, Morris Blake. Morris always asserted that unless he had the assistance of "baccy and sthrong waters" he was quite unqualified for the two latter offices. By observing what quantity of smoke he puffed out and how much whisky he took in, it was not difficult to estimate the degree of interest he felt in a story. Judging by these tests, I was highly gratified at the effects my tale produced—they were simply immense. "Hæving done, he gave me for my pains a world of thanks," and, to use his own phrase, "concurred intirely" in all my conclusions. And then, promising me his personal assistance and countenance, we arranged our plan of operations.

The following morning we went together to Highgate. We were fortunate: there was no difficulty in finding the house—a handsome mansion in its own grounds; and the Baroness was at home. Lest she should remember my name, we had agreed that Blake was to send in his card. There was no hesitation in admitting us, and we were shown at once into a large apartment, which—although altered by the tapestry I formerly described being transferred to a different side, leaving the windows it before concealed visible—I immediately recog-

nised as the one I had used for a studio. It was occupied by a lady, tall and enormously fat, with grey hair, but dark eyebrows, dressed in deep mourning. She was seated at a table with what appeared to be a ledger and several account-books open before her. As we entered she turned upon us a glance of the keenest black eyes I had ever seen.

"Goot mornin', shen'l'mens," she said; by Jove! with the preliminary wheeze and husky tones recognisable, and to be sworn to, as if heard only yesterday. "Vhat ist your bleasure mit me? Veesh ist Mishter Plake?"

"Yours to command, madam," said Morris, bowing low. "But you'll not remember me. Sure it's my friend here that's wantin' to renew the pleasure of an ould acquaintance with you, Baroness."

"An olt acvaintance mit me!" she exclaimed, turning on me a searching look. "Vhat ist your name?"

"Permit me the honour, madam," I replied, placing my card before her. "Surely you have not forgotten me?" As she read my card, and I spoke, her expression visibly changed to one curiously impenetrable and defiant.

"I nefare knowed you—I hafe nefare seed you in alle mine life. Vhat ist you mean?" she hastily answered, rising, and at the same time pulling a bell.

"Mean, madam? Oh, nothing but to recall my

self to your memory. I know it is many years ago, but you can hardly have forgotten that I painted in this room a picture, in which the deaf-and-dumb model, Serafina Pagano, commonly called 'La Principessa,' whom you brought from Florence, and who is now living at Naples, sat for one of the figures, and which picture the late Baron Mordecai sold as a Murillo to Viscount Bricbrakmont for thirteen thousand guineas, as his lordship told me only the day before yesterday."

As I went on speaking, she turned very pale, and pressed her hand painfully on her bosom; and when I finished, apparently taken quite off her guard, in a hoarse, broken whisper, asked the question that, in reality, acknowledged everything.

"Hafe you tell eem as you vas baint it?"

"No: I have told him nothing yet." My reply seemed to relieve her; but she sank into her seat again as if unable to support herself.

At the same time, from the door through which I used to go to my bedroom, there entered a man in whom, despite a bald head and other changes which age had made in his appearance, I recognised the individual I had seen under the carriage-lamp, with features the prototypes of those belonging to the dead head. He seemed sorely startled at beholding the palpable agitation of the Baroness, and demanded in a bullying tone—

"Was giebt's denn? was giebt's denn?"

"Schweig, schweig, Nathan!" the lady answered, holding up her hand and beckoning him. "Zu mir, gleich, gleich!"

Long and earnestly they conversed in whispered German. My companion and I curiously noticed how Nathan seemed suddenly, from the first words she spoke to him, to be infected by his mistress's fear and pallor. Gradually, as they continued to converse, we observed stealing over the faces of both the same hard defiant expression assumed at first by the lady. At last the man turned to us, and said quite in a threatening manner—

"De Baroness Mordecai say she know noting apout de von or de t'oder oaf you; an' noting apout no bicture at all;—no. So you git away mit you, both at vonce."

I was about to reply in a very indignant manner; but Morris, turning upon me a look with the irrepressible devil of an Irishman's fun in it, took upon himself to be spokesman. It was in his very suavest manner that he said—

"Oh, bedad! I was just thinking so, sirr. An' it's sorry I am for any bother we've given the Baroness; an' I hope she'll forgive us, seeing it was only beca'se we consated we'd settle by a little cosy chat among ourselves, ye see, the throuble she's likely to git out o' lawshutes, an' all that, with my Lord Viscount Bricbrakmont" (good heavens! how he mouthed the title); "an' also havin' a lot o' quare

stories raked up consarnin' how the Baron—rest his sowle!—used to mannyfacture old pictures out o' new ones. An' there's that quarer story yet about a kilt man's head—for kilt, somehow, we all know he was—over the likes o' which the rascally po-lice, magistrates, an' editors o' papers 'll just make a shine—oh, such a shine!—won't they? But there; if it's only disagreeable we're making ourselves—many apologies, madam and sirr—good mornin';—we'll humbly take our leaves,—good mornin'."

Immense was the effect of this "firework" which Morris threw at the pair: every joint of the crack-er as it exploded increased their obvious dismay, especially that of the Baroness.

"Shtop! shtop! eef you bleasc. You don't go till I vas shpeak mit you," she querulously entreated, recalling us. She had become more deadly pale, and was pressing her hand with a more painful gesture upon her heart. "Nathan, halt des maul," she said, speaking with great sharpness to the man; then she addressed me, moving at the same time to the recess of the farthest window: "You shoost bleasc to coom here. Let me talk a leetle mit you."

I went to her; but it struck me as rather a hardy thing to do, for, as she faced me, I think I never saw a human face with an aspect of such fierce malevolence.

"Now den," she asked, in a short sharp whisper, "how mo'sh you vant?"

"How much I want!" I repeated, taken completely aback.

"Ach, ya-es! say,—how mo'sh money?"

"Money!" I exclaimed, laughing, as her view of what we came for dawned upon me. "My good madam, I don't want any money."

"Himmel's donner! was ist es den as you vants?"

"Baroness," I said, speaking aloud, and moving to the centre of the room, "my friend is of counsel with me in this matter. I can have no discussion with you to which he is not a party. What I want is satisfaction to some very uneasy feelings I have. I ask you, and you must—mind me, you *must*—explain to me the mystery of that man's head which I painted here,—how he came by his death?"

"Gott in himmel!" she interrupted me, by exclaiming indignantly. "Vhat!—you tinks we 'as mordert eem?"

"I hope not," I replied, firmly.

"Vhy, he was dis man's bruder—Nathan's zwilings-bruder—vhat you calls eem's tween."

"Good Lord!—his twin-brother!" I could not help exclaiming, as the wonderful similarity of features recurred to my recollection. "And how was he kil—that is, how did he die?"

"Nathan, you say eem how your boor bruder vas kilt."

The Baroness had to repeat her commands twice before Nathan, who had watched us with a cowed but malignant aspect, reluctant and sulky, complied.

“He hafe bin in de garten, an’ a-cuttin’ de grass mit a scyt’, fruh in de mornin’. An’ vee tinks he puts de scyt’ agin de vall; an’ den he gits oop a latter dere, an’ he toomple, oder de latter toomple, an’, ach mine himmel! de messer cuts his leek so schwer—oonter de knee—shoost here.” The poor man indicated the place with his hand on his own limb.

“Popliteal artery, by Jabers!” interpolated Blake. Nathan paused, regarding Morris doubtfully; but apparently satisfied by the sympathy his face expressed, he continued—

“Mine bruder! ach, mine bruder! no potty hear eem, he cannot git oop; an’ he plead, an’ he plead; an’ vhen vee finds eem, he ist deat’; ja, mine boor bruder ist ganz deat’, ja—ja—deat’!” He became more and more affected as he went on relating the sad event, till, at the conclusion, overcome by his feelings, he rushed from the room.

It was only after a considerable pause that the subject was resumed by Blake inquiring: “And pray, madam, was there any public notice taken of the poor man’s death?”

“No-dice!—Gott in himmel!—ya’es. Dere coom de goroner an’ eem’s jury, an’ eet vas in all de bapers.”

"Oh, thin, thank you Baroness. Excuse my curiosity; but how came his head to be painted without iver a body to it?"

"Oh, das vas pecause he hafe no blut in eem; an' he make so pe-u-tifool a Shone der Paptist, mit de Princess. Vee hafe pring her mit us to pe mottel for anoder bictur' oaf de jung-frau Cenci; she hafe such eyes for dat she hear not! aber, vhen dis habben, she doos efer so mo'sh betterer for a Salome mit eem, ya'es. So vee cut eem away his head."

Morris and I glanced at each other, and then at the singular creature before us who, in so indifferent a manner, avowed the cutting off a corpse's head, without the shadow of a doubt in either of our minds that the act had been done by the fat, jewelled, and nervous hands lying there so composedly on her lap. Her manner, during the latter part of our conversation, had completely changed to one which I can only describe as "gossipy." Suddenly, after a pause, she addressed me—

"Vere doos you leef, now?"

I told her.

"Doos der Viscount coom dere to you?"

"No; I saw him at his own place in —— shire."

She looked furtively, yet keenly, or rather knowingly, at me.

"Vhen you vas coom in, vhat vas you say apout de bicture you vas baint, as he hafe eet?"

"Yes, madam. He told me the whole story, and how, as well as for what, he bought it of Baron Mordecai."

"Ah, I knows noting apout dem tings. Vhat he tink eet vas when he buy eet?"

"He bought it for a Murillo, madam, at a cost of thirteen thousand guineas," I replied, severely; but my answer only seemed to amuse her, for she actually laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Potztausand! vas for a fool! He ist von as tink he know eferyting apout bictures. He see a bicture, an' he say, Dis ist Polemberg; he see anoder, an' he say, Dis ist Cuyp; an' he say, Dis Ostade; oder, Guido Reni; oder, Murillo; an' eef you gontradict eem, you make eem in a great bassion. Hafe you gontradict eem?"

"No, I certainly did not. It would be cruel, as he is so entirely satisfied."

"Oh, you ist vise man, gewiss! He vill nefare forgif you—he hate you allevays—if you gontradict eem. Vee hafe pay you alle for your bicture vhat vee hafe bromise?"

"More, Baroness, more. I am bound to acknowledge you acted most liberally."

"An' when you coom'd here, I doos alle I says I doos for you?"

"Certainly, in every particular—certainly."

"Ah, eet vas vhat der Baron say; you vas a perfit shen'l'man; dat eef you gif your vort oaf

honour you nefare, nefare forgits eem — ya'es. I hafe lofe you den—a goot deal lofe you ; an' I lofe you now fery mo'sh."

I was greatly startled by the tender confession, uttered, as it was, in the wheeziest whine I had yet heard her use. But I was in a much greater degree surprised by the adroit manner in which she managed to shift me from being the "master of the situation," into one in which I had to confess myself the obliged party, the recipient of favours, and the subordinate to pledges which, though given so long ago, were reproduced now in their native freshness, as altogether indestructible by time or circumstance. As for Morris Blake, I believe he thoroughly enjoyed the position affairs had assumed.

"An' he desarves it, Baroness," he struck in ; "as well as being exactly the one to appreciate the soft kindness, now his conscience isn't haunted any longer by raw heads an' bloody bones. As for your Murillos an' viscounts, as they seem mighty well satisfied with each other, I'll go bail he won't interfere by word or deed. Why should he ? when, as you tould him long ago, 'tis no business of his at all."

This assurance seemed highly satisfactory to the lady, especially when it was corroborated by myself. As we had now neither reason nor excuse for prolonging our visit, we took leave of the Baroness,

and that with a cordiality which neither of us would have thought probable when we entered her presence an hour before.

"Supayrb cra'tur, that !" Morris remarked, as we got into our hansom. "I'd just like to bet to any amount that 'tis she wove the net that caught the Vi—— Hollo ! hould me, Charley ! hould me tight, or I'll be over head an' ears in poethry !"

I could not help laughing, as I assented strongly to his opinion.

"Yes ; an' the sentiments the story convarts me to, Charley, is that the pictur'-thrade, bedad ! licks horse-chauntin' by chalks."

While returning to town, an idea occurred to us which we carried out at once by driving to the British Museum, where, by the courtesy of Mr B—— of the reading-room, we were enabled to verify, from the 'Times' of the date, the account of the accidental death of Nathan's brother.

The Baroness lived till a little more than a year ago. I have a great respect for her memory. I really think she was a good sort of woman in her way. She presented to my youngest child, a girl, a very handsome coral with gold bells, besides a necklace and sleeve-loops of the same with massive gold clasps ; also, at various times, several articles of jewellery, and some splendid old point-lace to my wife. Through her generosity, too, I am the possessor of that embossed and chased silver dish

which, whilom, did duty for King Herod's salver in my picture of Salome and John the Baptist's head. As for the picture, when Lord Bricbrakmont died, several years ago, it was disposed of by his heir, a distant relative, without a scintillation of æsthetic taste, to the great Russian *dilettante* Prince Dglmlgziskoff in private contract for some incredible amount of money previous to the rest of the collection being dispersed by Christie & Manson. It is, I suppose, in Russia; but wherever it may be, as I see no occasion for further secrecy, I here assert my claim to be the painter "OF THE GREAT MURILLO DE LA MERCED."

H. CARL S.

A PAROCHIAL EPIC.

IN EASY VERSE.

BY MR J—NES.

[MAGA. SEPT. 1858.]

“An Epic should have a beginning, a middle, and an end.”

PART FIRST.

What a happy Parish we were, and how we loved each other.

MY cottage many a year has stood
Thick walled, and roofed with reddest tile,
With outs and ins, and gables rude,
And chimneys of fantastic style,
Twisted and ribbed ; and up the wall
With frequent nails all dotted o'er,
A dozen creepers spread and crawl,
And half block up the very door.
The garden to the south displays
Its fruits and flowers, its gravelled walks ;
And there in springtime's hopeful days
My friends and I have walks and talks.
And a wide scene the house commands,
For o'er the little stream we look ;
And past my patrimonial lands
We see the pastures of the Duke ;

The pastures stretching far and wide,
And where th' horizon meets the sky,
We see by distance magnified
His Grace's turrets soaring high.
And left and right on wooded spots
Snug villas face the mid-day sun—
Villas pretending to be cots,
But spacious mansions every one.
From Sparker's (colonel on half-pay),
To Wilding's (nabob from Bengal),
You'd loiter on a summer day
In half an hour, and pass them all ;
From Spike's (our doctor) on the height,
To Whilk's upon the stream you'd come—
Sir Smiffle Whilk, a London knight,
They say he's worth at least a plum.
Sir Smiffle Whilk—ambitious he—
Who thinks the name of shop a sin,
Nor tells us if the plum were tea,
Or oats, or indigo, or gin.
A genial host, a jolly face
(I'll bet the gin was pure and strong),
Who keeps his heart in the right place,
And puts his aitches in the wrong.
In youth at Mother Church he railed ;
At parsons he was quick to sneer,
But wealth and argument prevailed,
And he's churchwarden year by year.
There never was a spot so blest,
In friendly thoughts and actions kind ;
And all the villas were at rest,
United in one heart and mind.
A little sameness might be found
In our calm life's unvaried train ;

We dined in a three-weekly round,
And then began the round again.
We knew the stories Sparker told,
Bradley's white soup and Harling's fish,
Bell's tawney port, Hogg's sherry old,
And Bingley's everlasting dish.
We knew the tunes Matilda played,
The songs Jane sang with art sublime,
The "Bee Sucks," the "Bewildered Maid,"
And liked them better every time.
On Monday Hogg's, on Tuesday Gray's,
On Wednesday Whilk's, and all alike ;
Thursday with Bell, on Friday Hay's,
And Saturday to tea with Spike.
A pleasant place, a happy band,
In mutual confidence secure,
Pouring their bounty o'er the land,
And soups and shillings on the poor.

PART SECOND.

What a good Rector we had. and what a delightful Curate. -

Our Rector wore a shovel hat ;
A stately man, erect and tall ;
Who always at the left hand sat,
And said the grace, and damped us all.
For though a simple rector here,
And vicar of a Shropshire town
(The two not quite a thousand clear),
York saw him Mr Canon Brown.
Upon his face a sleek repose,
A well-brushed coat, a snowy tie ;
With buckled tights, and silken hose,
And gracious manners kind yet high.

He smiled serenely when we spoke,
 And told of bishop, lord, or dean ;
 Sparker himself forebore his joke
 (His "points" could never have been seen)—
 For dull was Mr Canon Brown,
 And kind in all his words and works,
 Save when he'd keep dissenters down,
 And Papists, who were worse than Turks.
 We only saw him twice a-year,
 For only twice his tithes were due ,
 He preached—and we were pleased to hear ;
 He went—and we were happy too.
 For Dignity is sweet to see,
 But yet it keeps one on the strain ;
 And we returned with schoolboy glee
 To pleasant Mr Banks again.
 A Christian meek, a scholar fine,
 Our curate, enemy of strife ;
 Who told us of the love divine,
 And showed it in his daily life.
 Our curate—teacher in the school,
 Friend of the poor, the rich man's guide ;
 Gentle in talk, yet firm in rule—
 And a good cricketer beside ;—
 A man whom all the parish loved,
 So winning in his words and ways ;
 A romp—whom every child approved ;
 A saint—whom Scandal's self might praise.
 His sermon—many years ago—
 Was published, and the critics frowned,—
Guardian, "wide," "liberal," and "low"—
Record, "Arminian," and "unsound"—
Churchman, "It smells of Wesley's tub"—
Banner, "High churchman to the core."

'Twas preached before our Friendly Club,
And cleared the debt, and something more.
The "Members" met, and passed a vote
Of humble gratitude and thanks ;
And Oxford's, Alford's, Kingsley's note,
Were poor, compared to Mr Banks'.
Two sisters gave his cot its grace,
And kept it like a fairy's bower :
For never was so gay a place
With sketch, and needlework, and flower.
Bright carpets clothed the tiny rooms,
Stained windows dimmed the oppressive glare,—
Or open, caught the summer blooms,
That dallied with the evening air.
He never called us to his board
(He couldn't half contain us all),
But when the autumn gave its hoard,
And plums hung on the garden wall,
His lawn was filled with young and old,
And strawberries and cream went round,
And joyous goblets, hot or cold,
Were under the old pear-tree found.
And somehow, when the sun declined,
'Twas still remarked, our village band
Of voices, brass and strings combined,
By merest chance, were close at hand,
Either in boats that ran aground
Or in the punt that wouldn't move ;
And somehow it was always found
They had some airs, just come, to prove ;
And clear and high the loud bassoon
Responded to the fiddle's squeal,
And both united in a tune
Sounding immensely like a reel.

—

And Banks himself and sisters twain
Took out the children, laughing gay,
And danced, and set, and led the train,
Till breathless and opprest were they.
Then Sophy Sparker led the brawl,
And grown-up couples joined the line ;
And Wilding said 'twas like Bengal,
And all the girls said 'twas divine.
And home we went our several ways—
The merriest day of all the year :
Such charm a loving heart conveys
To humblest home and modest cheer.
Both sisters—it were hard to tell
Which pleased us most in looks and tones ;
And if I were not married——well,
I won't show this to Mrs J—nes.

PART THIRD.

What a noble old Church we had, and how we repaired and beautified
it exceedingly.

A grave square tower of solemn size,
Lifting its tranquil head in air,
Looks meek, yet trustful, to the skies—
Embodiment of praise and prayer ;
And steep-ridged roofs from east to west
Stand guarded by its evening shade,
Or in the morning's sunshine drest,
Show their red tiles in rich parade ;—
Strong tower, plain roofs, and three-feet walls.
King Henry, when he raised the pile,
Made oath and said, " Whatever falls,
This house of God will stand a while."

And so it did, and heard the sound
Of wars and tumults far away,—
Of Luther pawing up the ground,
Like a wild bull intent on fray,—
Of bluff King Henry, how he rode
The State as man ne'er rode before—
How his fierce heart for Anna glowed,
And how he quenched his rage in gore—
How harshly on the monks he swept,
And turned the nuns all out of bed—
The lazy monks, who fed and slept—
The lazy nuns, who slept and fed.
And ever as the changes came—
The mass, the prayers, the mass again—
The great old tower looked still the same,
And change and chances raged in vain.
It heard of bloody Mary's wrath,
And Cranmer's pile, and Ridley's crown,—
Of the Armada's onward path,
And of its glories trampled down ;
And ever round its turrets cawed
The self-same rooks in narrowing ring,
Whether they curst Archbishop Laud,
Or croaked hoarse blessings on the King
Steady, serene it raised its height,
While many a sunny day went by,
And felt in many a wintry night
The thunders shake its flagstaff high.
Unchanged, untouched, its old grey head
Has seen births, burials, joy and pain ;
Twelve times has seen the parish dead,
And twelve times seen it filled again.
Yet wood is fragile, taste decays,
And rottenness was smelt inside,

Square windows opening fifty ways,
And whitewashed pillars shamed our pride.
But Banks had preached, and prayed, and fleeced
A vast collection for repairs ;
And when five hundred pounds was reached,
He gave himself prodigious airs,
And talked of Barry—Cockerell—Scott—
And sent for estimate and plan ;
And 'twas determined on the spot
To meet his wishes—happy man !
And down went pews so dark and deep,
Like culprits' cells in model jails ;
And off went whitewash at a sweep
From raftered roof and altar rails.
And Minton's tiles adorned the floor,
And low-backed seats filled all the space ;
And there were sittings where the poor,
With Whilk himself, took equal place.
Rich panes above the table glowed
With Bible scene and holy line ;
Jordan through blessed windings flowed,
And rippled round the feet divine.
And John held forth his warning hand,
While gravely walking, One came near ;
And the hushed crowd astonished stand
The Baptist's humbled words to hear.
And rich in colour—though subdued—
The central pane deep shadows sent
On the great gathering round the rood,
And the meek head in anguish bent.
All solid oak from roof to floor,
With dark old carving on the beams ;
The pulpit panels clustered o'er
With sculptures from old Scripture themes.

Adam expelled—the dove let free—
 Lot's wife and Jezebel abhorred—
 Goliath's head—a sight to see !—
 Cut off with his own dreadful sword !
 The bills came in—but what of them ?
 To twice the expected sum they came ;
 But who such glories could condemn ?
 Who could begrudge such well-earned fame ?
 We met, and Mr Banks explained
 'Twas Pugin's, Scott's, Palladio's fault ;
 And thus a perfect church we gained,
 From coloured floor to fretted vault.
 An ox was roasted—bonfires blazed—
 Bells sounded 'neath the summer sun,
 And we ourselves were quite amazed
 At the great action we had done.

PART FOURTH.

We go as a deputation to the Patron—A new Rector is appointed.

Pleasant at evening to recline
 On the smooth green beside the brook
 (When all the neighbours met to dine
Al fresco at the Lamb and Crook,
 The only inn for miles around,
 Famous for trout and home-brewed ale),
 And listen to the cheering sound
 Of joy-bells echoing through the vale.
 Where Sparker shone in repartee ;
 And Whilk was grand ; and Alice Hay

Sang like the thrushes on the tree,
As light and innocent as they.
And laughter rose at quip and crank,
And fun was in its mid career—
When, hark ! beyond the hazel bank,
A muffled bell's sad note we hear.
A muffled bell ; the grey church-tower
Grew sombre as we caught the sound,
And silence fell with mystic power,
And whispered questions quick went round.
" Who's dead ? " " What neighbour have we lost ? "
" What villager has time thrown down ? "
Then came with saddened looks mine host,
And said, " It's Mr Canon Brown."
Our rector ! every voice was hushed ;
And busy memories were rife,
As full to every bosom rushed
Remembrance of his upright life ;
His kindnesses—his gracious words ;
His friendly acts in cot and hall,—
And if some errors turned the chords
To discord, we forgot them all :
He had no errors, or they grew
To virtues in our tearful strain ;
It seemed as if that hour we knew
We ne'er should see his like again.
Deep conclave all that night we held,
And pro and con the matter weighed ;
And all the parish glowed and swelled
To take the field in Banks's aid.
And early on the following day
We mounted horse and chaise and gig,
And to the Duke's we took our way,
As Sparker said, in fullest fig.

We touched the bell—the footman stared,
And stood transfixed, as if he saw
Twelve jurymen in haste prepared
To cheer his mind with Crowner's law ;
Or railway valuers come to pace
The courtyard for a rival line ;
Or twelve stout waiters out of place,
Drest in white ties and superfine.
He said, "The Duke had not comed in"—
"Was busy"—"Reading"—"Gone to bed."
But a half-sovereign stilled his din,
And pleasantly the way he led ;
And in some half a minute's space
He oped a door and said aloud,
"A deputation, please yer Grace,"—
And the whole twelve went in and bowed.
The Duke took out a dark short "clay"
From his big mouth, with court'sy scant ;
And looked as if he wished to say
Why, what do the old fogies want ?
He only looked and stared awhile ;
And then Sir Smiffle Whilk began,
And tried his favour to beguile,
And the whole round of praises ran :
And ended with the statement clear,
"That we should owe him endless thanks
If he'd——" at this we cried "Hear, hear"—
"Appoint the Reverend Mr Banks."
"A—'pon my soh !" the Duke began,
"A—shud've been happy beyond bounds—
A—a—cleaned out when Favourite ran—
A—sold it for two thousand pounds.
Some f'la—a—didn't ask his name—
A regular trumpeter, I'm told—

Is first in hand—It's all the same—
 Sorry you're so immensely sold."
He put the pipe within his lips,
 And puffed, and covered us with smoke ;
And we—in such a heart eclipse—
 We only bowed, and never spoke.
"Sad thing old Brown has hopt the twig ;
 A—thought—he'd such a jolly look."
We mounted horse and chaise and gig,
 Disgusted with his Grace the Duke ;
And told the tale—and far and near
 Sadness on all the parish fell ;
And doubly bitter 'twas to hear
 At intervals that muffled bell.
Banks soon got notice to resign,
 And ere three weeks were past away,
The Auctioneer, with speeches fine,
 Scattered the furniture for aye—
The cottage chairs, the curtains neat,
 The modest tables, all are gone :
I bought the little garden-seat,
 Though I had plenty of my own.
And Banks and sisters came at last
 To say good-by ; and rich and poor
Such blessings on the parting cast
 As made it easier to endure.
And when the car was fairly come
 To bear them from their friends away,
My wife, my daughters, all were dumb,
 They hadn't got a word to say.
Old fellows' hearts of forty-nine
 Are not quite hardened into stones :
I took the sisters' hands in mine,
 And kissed them—*pace* Mrs J—nes—

And in two days a card went round
To every house, and there with awe,
Printed in Roman text, we found

The Reverend

EBENEZER MAW.

PART FIFTH.

Our new Rector comes into residence—and astonishes our weak minds.

The Reverend Ebenezer Maw,
A freckled man, with sandy hair,
Filled every heart with solemn awe
When he went up the pulpit stair.
So vast a bulk, such shoulders wide,
So thick a waist, such giant pins,
With mighty cheeks on either side
Of a large mouth and several chins !
We ne'er had seen so big a face
With moisture oozing from each pore.
He was a vessel filled with grace,
With drops for ever running o'er.
We watched, when his discourse began,
His every attitude and tone,
Expecting great things from a man
Of five feet one, and sixteen stone.
He said our parish was a sight
Enough to make the angels weep ;
Our ignorance was dark as night,
Our wickedness than hell more deep.
We ne'er had heard the blessed sound
Of Gospel truth for many a year ;

But now he'd scatter all around
The words 'twould make us blest to hear.
He would not mention, though he knew,
Our poor old Rector's present state ;
And then a horrid sketch he drew
Of the dear Canon's awful fate.
But hotter pains and heavier woes
Were heaped in fiery ranks on ranks,
To fall, when his career should close,
On the doomed head of Mr Banks.
His generous works his doom had sealed,
His charities would sink him down ;
And there was equal wrath revealed
On Mr Banks and Canon Brown.
" You think I'm but a stranger here,
And that my strokes at random fall ;
But I will pierce you with my spear,
For, rich and poor, I know you all ;
I know what wicked thoughts are yours,
What vanity you hide in silk,
But riches are deceitful lures
(And here he eyed Sir Smiffle Whilk).
I know the wealthiest are the worst,
The most depraved in act and thought ;
But his uncleanness shall be curst,
And his dark crimes to daylight brought."

We met beneath the yew-tree shade,
And marvelled at the things we heard ;
We were so wildered and dismayed,
We scarcely could pronounce a word.
But Whilk broke through the silent rule,
And said, " Was hever such an 'ound ?
I'll prosecute the libellous fool
If it should cost a thousand pound."

Said Wilding, on our homeward way,
"He seems to know Sir Smiffle's life,—
P'raps he's a swindler,—who can say?
P'raps Lady Whilk is not his wife."
And all the bad the story caught,
And swallowed the report with greed;
Finding great comfort in the thought
That Whilk would certainly be dee'd.
Parish-Churchwarden Mr Gray
Invited a few friends to dine,
To welcome in a quiet way
Our grave and ponderous divine.
He came—he gorged on soup; on trout;—
And mixed strange texts with all his cheer—
With mouth chuck-full, he blurted out,
"Oh! could I find the Gospel here!"
He ate the beef—he ate the pie—
He ate the cutlets and the tarts,
And then groaned forth, with half-shut eye,
"There's wickedness in all your hearts.
I was a drunkard in my youth—
A liar, glutton, and a thief—
But now I'm perfect in all truth,
And of the second birth am chief.
Yet, in your bosoms deeply hid
The same vile thoughts I clearly see,—
You'd wish to do as once I did,
And drink, and lie, and steal like me."
He stuffed the apples and the pears—
The nuts he cracked and gulped so quick—
With guava, ginger, and such wares,
We thought each minute he'd be sick.
But of old wine he would not hear,
'Twas the soul's poison he'd declare—

He who would taste one drop of beer
Would go—he would not tell us where.
He couldn't find a happier use
For his now cleansed and reverend hand,
Than twisting cart-ropes in a noose
For every brewer in the land.
"The gloom of sin is on you all ;
Your charms " (he looked on Alice Hay)
"Are but your leaders to a fall,—
You're broken cisterns. Let us pray."
He prayed, expounded—breathing fast,
So loaded to the brim was he,
Then through the ante-room he passed
And recommenced his work at tea.
He dwarfed us as a dingy hulk,
Mud filled, on Thames's sludgy tide,
With broadened bows and shapeless bulk
Dwarfs the regatta's pigmy pride.
He sat and on the shining row
Of Hay's young daughters fixed his stares,—
And said, "It filled his heart with woe
To know what wicked thoughts were theirs.
He knew what envy, hatred, pride,
And darker passions raged within ;
He knew their force, for he had tried
And drunk the very dregs of sin."
And Mary blushed, and Alice paled,
And little Susan laughed and grinned
To think her sisters e'er had failed
In duty, or in thought had sinned.
For all the three were pure as glass,
Which made our witty Sparker say,
"If it were true all flesh was grass,
The very best of it was Hay."

And they had such a lofty grace,—
Such modest and delightful girls !—
In every motion you could trace
The bluest blood of northern earls
But old and young he blamed alike,
And said such horrid words, I vow,
Our dear old-maid Sibylla Spike
Was one great blush from chin to brow.
He told Sibylla, poor old soul,
That she was half-inclined to Rome—
And having gorged his buttered roll
And thirteenth cup, he waddled home.

PART SIXTH.

A terrible change comes upon the Parish, and we hate each
other amazingly.

Sir Smiffle said, “ his dander riz,”
And he was purple with amaze
“ To think a libeller of his
Should have been asked to dine at Gray’s—
’Twas a hunfriendly hact to do.”
But Gray retorted ; Whilk replied ;
And in another month or two
We all took one or other’s side.
And dinners ceased, and when we met
We passed, and cut each other dead ;
The godly scorned the worldly “ set,”
The worldly tossed its scornful head ;
And half the girls—the ugly half—
Were filled with righteousness and hate,
And met our side’s contemptuous laugh
By gloating o’er our future fate.

All the thick ankles learned to sneer
At feet too small to be forgiven ;
And Sparker said, 'twas very clear,
Flat-soles would win the race to heaven.
The dowdy maids adored their Maw,
And did whatever he decreed,
And soon despised the moral law
As very weak skim-milk indeed.
And bought a stock of curious things,
And ticketed them off in lots ;—
Strong "Calls" for Abyssinian kings,
And pretty "Tales" for Hottentots.
And soups and shillings reached no more
The cottager, his griefs to ease,
But tracts were left at every door
Against such wicked "works" as these !
There were no meetings on the green,
Nor children's dances after tea ;—
What frowns would settle on the scene !
How busy slander's tongue would be !
Sweet Alice Hay—sweet Bessy Bell,
Were shocked and terrified awhile ;
They thought—they feared—they couldn't tell—
Had they indeed been lost and vile ?
Had they no happy thoughts of love,
No kindness for the poor and weak ?
Were they shut out from hopes above ?
And were they—what they could not speak ?
O Bessy Bell !—O Alice Hay !
Trust not such breath with falsehood fraught ;
That fetid breath would dim for aye
The crystal mirror of your thought.
Cleansed are your breasts and freed from sin
By the sweet burden they contain ;

Like the small manger at the Inn
Where the redeeming Child has lain.
Therefore, fair blossoms of the tree
That ripens 'neath the Christian sun,
Grow to rich fruits of charity !
Grow till the autumn's prize be won !
Then shall the blessings of the poor,—
The parent's love, the sister's kiss,—
Show how true hearts—in faith secure—
Make Heaven of such a world as this !
Wilding would never come to Church,
He said his mind was ill at ease,
And then began to search and search
Into old councils and decrees ;
But tired of all, and soon began
To let his thoughts be eastward drawn,
And quoted from the Alcoran,
Or as he called it, El Koraun,
And frightened his poor simple wife
By talking of some extra wives,
“He knew some Muslim ”—on his life,
“They led most reputable lives.”
And Whilk became a Puseyite,
With crimson crosses on his Prayers,
And came to Church, as if in spite,
To show his semi-popish airs.
And good old Spike no comfort sought
In friendly circles as of yore,
And took to drinking, and was caught
Speechless behind the surgery door.
Miss Martha Maw came down to aid
Her brother in his high emprise—
Strong-minded, able-bodied maid,
Unmatched in eloquence and size.

When the Militia came to drill,
She entered tents with tracts in hand,
And showed her theologic skill
By teaching discord to the band ;
She soon through all the regiment passed,
And gained a Baptist drummer's ear,—
But changed and ran away at last
With a regenerate grenadier.
Now half the houses are to let,
And half the others to be sold,
We find our new converted set
So different from the sinful old.
And sad the memories we recall
Of the sweet days that cheered our town ;
And the dear links that bound us all
To Mr Banks and Canon Brown.

A MILITARY ADVENTURE IN THE PYRENEES.

BY A PENINSULAR MEDALLIST.

[MAGA. JAN. AND FEB. 1856.]

CHAPTER I.

I CALL it “in the Pyrenees,” because, though the affair did not come off amidst the peaks which crest the highest eminences of that stupendous ridge, nor in the dark ravines which intersect its spurs, the hamlet which was the scene of my adventure was situated where the base of the range already begins to swell out of the plain; and that elevated table-land was in fact but a step in the ascent to the lofty summits of the mountains.

Having in the Peninsular campaign of 1812 received a wound which compelled me to pass the winter of 1812-13 at Lisbon as an invalid, I rejoined my regiment in the spring of 1813. I reached the British headquarters in time to partake in the glorious march across the north of Spain, and in its grand finish under the walls of Vittoria.

Our regiment was pushed well forward in the early part of the combat, won unrecorded laurels, and, after victory had declared in our favour, advanced rapidly some leagues beyond the city, eastward. In the next few days, after crossing some very high ground, we got into a strange, out-of-the-way district, all thorns and gravel, dried water-courses and barren flats; and at length were halted at a small hamlet, where we rested awhile, and received an order to march in the direction of the French frontiers. Vast was our delight at the prospect of getting into France; but I, alas! was doomed to temporary disappointment. We had a few invalid soldiers, too ill to march; it was necessary to leave them at the hamlet till they could be transferred to the nearest convalescent depôt; an officer must needs remain with them in charge; and I was the fortunate individual, kindly selected by our gallant colonel. I respectfully urged some other arrangement. Why couldn't he have nominated a pawky ensign? "Captain ——," said he, "I settled it so, my dear sir, expressly with a view to your personal convenience. Consider your health. Why, you look like a shadow! You really must have a little rest. *I insist upon it.*"

Remonstrance was unavailing. The regiment marched, and I remained in charge. The invalids, till we could obtain the means of transporting them back to Vittoria, were lodged in a deserted and

plundered convent, which we fitted up for their reception as best we were able. I was billeted by the Alcalde in a farmhouse, an old stone building, one of the few tenements in the village that ranked above a hovel. The farmer and all his family had disappeared; but I was courteously received by a jolly old monk. He had prepared dinner, brought out unimpeachable Catalonian wine, and at once made me at home by making himself perfectly so, both at table and in the chimney-corner, where he occupied and filled an ancient arm-chair. The said chair was constructed of light wood or cane, with strips of hide, not leather, nailed crossways, and seemed to be his by prescriptive right.

He was an athletic man, a compound of clerical unction and massive force. Noticing among my baggage a fowling-piece, and, ceremoniously apologising, he craved permission to examine it; and, when withdrawn from the bag in which it usually travelled, took it into his hands, arighted it, brought it to the present, cocked his eye along it, and scanned it with the *contemplatio amorosa* of a connoisseur from butt to muzzle. He then courteously, but with a marked interest, begged leave to inquire, was I a sportsman? Evidently gratified by my reply in the affirmative, he assured me that there was no want of game in the immediate neighbourhood; and on the word of a Castellano, promised

me a good day's sport, if I felt well enough to accompany him the next morning after breakfast with gun on shoulder.

CHAPTER II.

Breakfast despatched, we set out, I on a mule, the Padre on a jackass. A lad of the village, Francisco by name, who had already begun to attach himself to my service, attended on foot—it was altogether his own voluntary act—to bag, and make himself generally useful. He was a silent, serious-looking youth, well-conducted, and, as I ultimately discovered, not deficient in intelligence.

When the country people in Spain go out shooting, their mode of supplying themselves with dogs is curious enough. On our reaching the Plaza, or open space in the village, the Padre called a halt. He and Francisco immediately began to whistle with all their might ;—that was enough. Suddenly emerging from all quarters at once, and evidently understanding the summons, came galloping up to us in a high state of exhilaration, as if eager for the fun, a whole pack of strange, nondescript, shaggy, yelping curs, no two alike, each an original—in short, the street-dogs of the hamlet. Certainly I never shot with such dogs before ; but under the circumstances they answered our purpose, as I shall presently relate.

The Padre had begged permission to examine my gun the day before. As we rode along, I now took a look at his; it excited my curiosity. Why, it was an old French firelock. I ventured to ask what it had cost him. He replied gravely, "Una cuchillada" (a blow with a knife).

I understood, and, not wishing to follow out that line of investigation further, begged to know what charge he used.

"Powder, the best English. For shot, balls."

"Balls, indeed! How many to a load?"

"To one charge, one bullet."

"And pray," said I, "what do you shoot?"

"You," he replied, "will shoot hares and partridges. Where I am taking you, I trust you will find no want of either. I shall shoot my own game, —or not shoot at all."

"Come, come, reverend Padre," said I, "let us understand each other. You, as a Spaniard, have your way of fighting; I, as an Englishman, have mine. Are we sportsmen to-day, or are we guerillas?"

"I am not a guerilla," he replied, "except in presence of the enemy; and, to the best of my belief, there are no Frenchmen left alive in this neighbourhood. Were there any, I am not an unlikely person to know it. However you fight, or I fight, this day we are out for sport, and not for war."

I might have inquired further, but preferred waiting to see the result, when we reached our sporting-ground, and got to work.

CHAPTER III.

The wild dogs of the village, who accompanied us to the number of fifteen or twenty, kept up among themselves no end of noise and squabble as we went along. One bit another; the sufferer yelled with pain, jumped round, and snapped at a third. Sometimes half-a-dozen set upon a single victim, knocked him over, throttled and worried him. Quarrel, jealousy, mutual exasperation and ill-will seemed to inspire the whole pack. Had one of my Kentish friends met me that day, he would have considerably widened his eyes to see me out shooting with such a following, let alone Francisco with his crimson belt and jaunty cap, and the Padre, who sat on his donkey like a sack of wheat.

To one of my canine attendants, however, my attention ere long was particularly directed;—a bitch of about a year old, in deportment and general appearance decidedly more presentable than the rest, and rather less unlike a sporting-dog. It appeared, in fact, that she had noticed me, while I had noticed her; for, instead of mingling with the

general hullabaloo as she went along, and taking part in the wrangle and running fight with the rest of the pack, she attached herself to me and my mule, and trotted on quietly by my side. In fact, she seemed to have made up her mind for a day's shooting, and to be husbanding her forces till we reached the ground. Observing that this discreet young lady had attracted my notice, Francisco stepped out till he got abreast, and, after walking awhile by my side, watching his opportunity to speak, said at length, "She is English."

"How English?" said I.

"Her father was English."

"Whence comes she?" I asked.

"From Madrid. She followed me from Madrid, when I came home."

"And what do you know of her parentage?"

"Her mother was a Madrileña. Her father was an English pointer, brought out to Spain by the Caballero Don Alfredo de la Montaña, of the British cavalry."

Ah, my old acquaintance, Sir Alfred Mountney of the —— Hussars. Any dog of his would be a good dog, no doubt of it. So here, it seemed, was a cross between the half-wild race of the Peninsula and a thorough-bred English sporting-dog.

A ride of a Spanish league by a gradually ascending route brought us at length to the mouth of a ravine, which we ascended by a still steeper path.

This path was in fact only the bed of a winter's torrent, and wound upwards between narrow banks of rock and stunted herbage, till at its extremity we emerged on a table-land, which stretched away to the horizon. This, my friend the Padre informed me, was the scene of our destined sport. Its whole surface, as far as eye could trace, was clumps of dwarfed and, for the most part, thorny shrubs, tangled with tufts of coarse sun-dried grass, the intervals of the thickets being sand and gravel.

Ere we had dismounted and begun to load, our pack jumped forward, and commenced a general gallopade in all directions over the plain, with much yelping, sniffing, and wagging of tails, zealously intent on putting up the game. I was beginning to wonder how it would be possible to do execution with so many interlopers, but noticed one exception to the outbreak. The Inglesita, as Francisco called her, stood quietly by our side with a very business-like look, waiting till we advanced. I loaded with small-shot, the Padre with ball.

The sport, so far as I was concerned, proved not bad. Hares were plentiful, though it was not always easy to get a shot at them, from the nature of the ground. Neither was there any lack of red-legged partridges, but the difficulty was in persuading them to rise. They ran like wild turkeys, so that—call it unsportsmanlike if you will—it was absolutely necessary to shoot them as they ran, or

they would have run out of sight. The Inglesita kept close till I had fired, or went a little in advance, and then made herself useful in recovering the game, which Francisco bagged perpetually, with gravity and much gusto. I once thought I noticed her coming to something very like a point. A while, with an air of graceful embarrassment, she stood on three legs, as if not knowing what to do with the fourth. As to the other dogs, they rendered good service after their fashion by beating up the game, but got so much in the way, it was a wonder I escaped lodging a few grains under some of their hides; which indeed they almost tempted me to do more than once—with a view to their improvement.

I was getting excited by the sport, when I suddenly heard a sharp crack, and the whizz of a bullet. So! my reverend comrade had found *his* game. "I have killed!" he shouted; "I always kill!"

The Inglesita ran forward; but speedily ran back again, her tail swollen, her bristles erect, her whole aspect eminently expressive of scorn, indignation, confusion, and disgust.

What could it be? The other dogs now gathered in the same direction, and stood round in a circle, barking with indescribable fury at something in their midst, which they appeared either afraid of, or indisposed to approach nearer.

The Padre walked up, and by the nape of the neck lifted his lifeless victim, a dog-fox.

"Señor Padre," said I, as we rambled homewards, "so that is the game you kill in preference. Foxes always? Nothing but foxes?"

"Foxes," said he—his eye flashed—"or Frenchmen."

Ere we reached home, I became acquainted with the Padre's military experiences. The history was simply an enumeration of the "Franceses" who had fallen by his hand, with a garnish of wild adventure. The Padre was not singular, as a native of the Peninsula, in his Gallican antipathies, nor yet in his taste for shooting foxes with ball.

CHAPTER IV.

In that sequestered village I remained for some days, in charge of my sick and wounded soldiers, things going on as usual. The jolly old guerilla-monk rejoiced in exercising the laws of hospitality, and was my companion in several shooting excursions, with Francisco, the Inglesita, and the same *posse comitatus* of village dogs. On one occasion the Rev. Padre conducted me to a small reedy lake embosomed in hills, where, what with wild-fowls and enormous water-snakes, we had a very fair day's sport. Generally, however, we took the direction

of the sandy, bushy, elevated table-land, and came staggering home under a load of hares and red-legged partridges, of which our patients, much to their own satisfaction, got an ample portion. It will not surprise any one who has gone through the exhausting, and, to a marching officer, the inglorious fatigues of a campaign, if I confess that this period of vacation, though not far remote from great strategic movements, and almost within the sound of big guns, was soothing to my spirits, as well as recreative to an exhausted constitution. Little did I dream that war, in a novel form, was about to beat up my quiet quarters. But let me not anticipate. The Padre, adhering to his own ideas of sporting, went on as before, shooting foxes with ball, or shooting nothing; in which peculiar line of things he continued to meet with occasional success. I never knew him miss a shot, but of course his opportunities were few.

When the regiment marched on, and I was left in charge, it was duly notified to me that a military surgeon would be sent from Vittoria to attend on our invalids. I anxiously waited day by day, but no surgeon came. Wrote letters—got answers—some criminative, some plaintive, some explanatory and unintelligible, some highly satisfactory—still no surgeon. The fact is, as I afterwards discovered, a young doctor, fresh from England, had landed in the North of Spain; and this was the gentleman

designated to give us the benefit of his services. But partly from confusion of orders, partly from the tardiness of communication, partly from his own want of campaigning experience, he remained for some time, with the best intentions, totally ignorant of his destination; and having knocked about from place to place, he at last reached our hamlet, with his case of instruments in the highest order for work, some four-and-twenty hours after the last of our sick men had been sent off for Vittoria.

Destitute as we were thus left of surgical and medical aid in our village hospital, I had procured, on my own responsibility, the occasional attendance of a rural practitioner—a native Spaniard. But he, a silent and meagre man, did little more than look at the patients: one poor fellow had already died, on the second day from our arrival; and, after a week's waiting, I was getting so savage at this strange neglect, that I was wellnigh taking some extraordinary step which might have destroyed my professional prospects for life, when the arrival of unlooked-for visitors brought us seasonable relief.

CHAPTER V.

I had just returned with the Padre and Francisco from a morning's sport, and was giving orders in front of my billet for the conveyance of hares and

birds to the hospital, when, looking down into the lane which led up into the village from the open country to the south, we became cognisant of an arrival. At this time we were always on the *qui vive*, especially in that direction. For the defeat of the French at Vittoria had been followed by a general break-up of their forces in Spain; all were eager to get back into France; there was a perpetual rush of Frenchmen in small parties from south to north, in the direction of the frontiers; there was also a perpetual decimation of their ranks by the exasperated peasantry; and my friend the Padre was perpetually on the look-out, prepared with a knife or a bullet for any "Francez" that might cross his path. He snorted at the sight of the approaching travellers; his dark complexion grew a trifle darker, and his look particularly quiet and savage.

"Four!" said he, in an altered tone of voice, a little husky and choking-like; "two on donkeys, one on mule-back, and one on foot. Are you loaded?"

"Nonsense, nonsense," said I. "Be quiet."

"Oh, very good, Señor Capitan; all the same," said he. "If you prefer it, we can give them board and lodging for the night, and take them to-morrow after breakfast, as they pass up the hollow road."

"Why, look at them," I replied. "Two of them at least are Spaniards, I undertake to say, even at this distance."

"Ah, Santa Eufemia!" he exclaimed, seeing better as they came nearer, "a party of wounded men! Look, one of them has his head bandaged, another has his arm in a sling."

Ere long the party reached us. Two were Spanish peasants, wounded in an affair with the French. The third was an addition to my hospital, in the shape of an English soldier. He had been taken prisoner; and, in the general break-up of the French army, had made his escape, assisted by the natives. Too much weakened by exhaustion and privation to alight without help, he looked around for a friendly arm. The Padre stepped up, took him affectionately round the waist, lifted him easy out of the saddle, and carried him like a baby into the house.

"Señor Capitan," said the Padre as he came out with an air of exhilaration, "for such an invalid as that your hospital is just the place. He requires no medicine, which you have not got. What he needs is rest and food, of which I trust there will be no want."

The two wounded Spaniards, also, were now assisted in, with a view to supplying the immediate wants of the whole party, previous to an arrangement for their removal to the hospital.

While the Padre was occupied with our new guests within, my own attention was directed to the individual who had accompanied them on foot. His age might be from five to eight and twenty;

he wore an old Spanish cloak, which nearly concealed his person, and a very old Spanish cocked-hat. His face, though not old, was weather-beaten, and lined with wrinkles, which indicated anxiety and suffering. I could not make him out. His quick eye was certainly not English, and, I thought, not Spanish. He privately made a hasty sign, as if wishing to communicate, and bespeaking confidence. Guessing how matters stood, I approached the beasts, and began to examine them.

"Monsieur," said he in a whisper, addressing me in French, "I perceive that you are an English officer. I have the honour to be a French officer."

"Very good," said I; "speak gently if you please, but not in a whisper."

"Monsieur," he continued, "I am a man of immense resources, or you would not see me here. My life during the last few days has been exposed to perpetual peril, which I have eluded only by singular address. The skill with which I have treated my three patients is just simply incredible."

"Are you then of the medical profession?" I asked.

"Excuse me," he replied. "I say it with pride, I am a soldier" (*je suis militaire*). "To save my life, however, with equal skill and benevolence I treated these sick men. In fact, my talents are universal. From the art of cookery up to the differential calculus, I know everything. May I

depend on your friendly protection?" he asked anxiously.

"As a prisoner of the English," I replied, "you are safe of course. Should you consider yourself more secure in confinement? or will you give your parole?" (I knew it mattered not a rush; for, exasperated as the Spaniards then were against the French, beyond the pale of English protection his life was not secure an instant.)

"Monsieur," said he, "I give you my *parole d'honneur*" — here he paused — "I give you my *parole d'honneur* that I will not escape from this place."

"That will do," I replied; "at least for the present. I think, then, you had better take up your quarters in my billet, and make yourself comfortable. You know what are the present feelings of the Spanish population. The less we say about your being a Frenchman the better."

"Monsieur," said he, laying his hand on his waistcoat, "I have yet one small request."

"How can I serve you?" I asked.

"Pardon me, Monsieur," he replied, as if about to communicate some great fact; "but the liberty I am about to take is so immense, I hardly know how——" (He bows very low.)

"Come," said I; "no ceremony between campaigners. If I can help you, I will with pleasure."

"During the last fortnight I have suffered in-

tensely. But the acme of my privations — ah ! might I presume ? ”

“ Tell me what it is, at any rate. ”

He rummaged in an inner pocket, and brought out an old brass snuff-box.

“ Look ! ” said he, dramatically, and raised the lid. “ Positively exhausted ! Empty ! For three days, not a pinch ! I appeal to a man of your sensibilities. Imagine, conceive, picture to yourself, if you can, the intensity of my sufferings. ”

I handed him my box. Receiving it with an air of eager and devoted gratitude, he rapidly applied to each nostril successive supplies of the pungent dust, mingling with his enormous pinches profound acknowledgments.

CHAPTER VI.

I stood chatting with my new acquaintance in the street, inwardly meditative on the extraordinary and perfectly *French* versatility, which could at one moment discuss arrangements for the preservation of his life under very ticklish circumstances, and the next, negotiate the loan of my snuff-box.

“ From what part of France are you ? ” I asked. “ From the south-west ? ”

“ Ah, ah ! ” said he. “ I feel flattered by your penetration. In fact, it is second only to my own. ”

Yes, sir, with exultation I inform you that I am not only a Frenchman, but a Gascon."

The Padre stood by my elbow. His look was sombre and dogged. Grasping my arm with nervous abruptness, he drew me a little aside. "So then I find that fellow is a Frenchman," he said. The Padre spoke with hideous grin and rolling eyes. I never saw such a horrid look.

"Yes," I replied; "and my prisoner."

"I do not perceive how that should be," he answered with forced calmness, "under the circumstances of the case."

"Depend upon it," said I, "such is the fact. I have taken his parole, am responsible for his safety, and feel bound to defend his life as I would my own. Besides, are you not aware that he has doctored your countrymen, the two wounded peasants?"

"That I know," said the Padre, "or he would not be alive at this moment."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said I, taking him by the arm as he had just before taken me; "here, come this way. Monsieur, this is the Rev. Padre, Don José Yriarte y Gusman." (The Frenchman bowed low, with the air of a dancing-master.) "And this, Señor Padre, is Monsieur——"

"Le Tisanier," said the Frenchman, bowing again.

"His father being French, he is of course con-

sidered a Frenchman. But his mother," I continued, extemporising, "was a Spaniard; and in fact he himself was born in Spain."

"Born in Spain," said M. le Tisanier, promptly adopting the idea; "born at Oviedo." (Another bow.)

"By profession, Señor Padre, he is a surgeon. And in that capacity he has tended your wounded countrymen; who in a recent skirmish, only that M. le Tisanier was present, and promptly lent his invaluable aid, were both shot dead. Ask them yourself."

"Both shot dead; ask them yourself," said M. le Tisanier.

"In the absence of an English surgeon," I added, "M. le Tisanier will be invaluable to me at the hospital, in attending my own sick men, as well as the two Spaniards."

The Padre looked a little perplexed. "I am somewhat out of order myself," said he plaintively. The Padre was a robust, hearty-complexioned man of some five-and-forty. With the exception of a slight tendency to corpulence, which was merely professional, you might have set him down for a picture of jolly health, satisfactory appetite, and good digestion.

"It was," I continued, "only the popular feeling against the French army, amounting, in fact, to exasperation, and indiscriminately including all in

any way of French connection, which compelled M. le Tisanier to make a hasty exit from Seville, where he had practised with immense success for, I think you said" (looking at M. le Tisanier), "nearly six years."

"Six years on the 5th of December next," said M. le Tisanier. "But permit me. My practice is not indiscriminate. Ordinary patients I decline. In short, I attend to none but hopeless cases—that is, cases given up by the faculty."

"I never could get any of the faculty to prescribe for my case," said the Padre, evidently beginning to feel an interest.

"Precisely," said M. le Tisanier. "There are, in effect, two classes of maladies which I comprehend under the title of hopeless, and which I therefore regard as peculiarly my province — those which practitioners abandon, and those which they refuse to take up. Yours, Señor Padre, appears to be of the latter category."

"Just so," replied the Padre, quite mollified and toned down. "The medicos about here, when I consult them, uniformly have the cruelty to say there's nothing the matter with me."

"I never heard of anything so utterly unprofessional," said M. le Tisanier. He stepped up politely to the Padre ; felt his pulse.

"Your tongue, if you please." The Padre put out his tongue.

"Ah, I perceive," said M. le Tisanier. "Pray," said he, looking the Padre very earnestly in the face; "pray——" He put his mouth to the Padre's ear, and his voice dropt into a whisper. I stepped back. There followed a brief but very earnest conference, which I did not overhear, and which my pen is not sufficiently graphic to portray.

"Come, gentlemen," said the Padre, "suppose we step in and take dinner.

M. le Tisanier, as we followed the Padre indoors, contrived, with much scraping, to get together a final pinch out of my all but exhausted snuff-box, to which, during the preceding conference, his attentions had been incessant. He then returned the box, with every demonstration of the deepest gratitude.

"You had better give me yours also," said I; "then I can fill both at the same time."

"Ah, Monsieur," he replied, "you overwhelm me with benefits. But for you I might have been at this moment a dead man. The address with which, in such difficult circumstances, you improvised my doctorate, excited my high admiration. Talent like yours compels me—yes, I say it fearlessly—compels me to turn my thoughts inwards, and to contemplate—myself."

CHAPTER VII.

Acquaintance and good fellowship are soon knocked up between soldiers on service; and I was beginning to acquire quite a liking for my new companion, all whose peculiarities of character proved highly amusing. I took an early opportunity of remarking to the Padre, that though his own impressions of el Doctor Tisañero had been favourably modified, yet I hoped he would exert his influence with the inhabitants of the village and parts adjacent; otherwise my prisoner might still be regarded and dealt with as a *bonâ fide* Frenchman, a result which, in the existing state of popular feeling, would be highly tragical. "Yes, yes," said the Padre. "A word from me is sufficient, so long at least as he remains in this neighbourhood; and that word I have spoken. The Doctor may with perfect security go to and from the hospital. He may also go out shooting with us; or go by himself if he likes, provided he does not go too far."

M. le Tisanier promptly commenced his attendance at the hospital, and with good effect. Certainly the lively step with which he skipped from bed to bed was not precisely that which one would look for in a member of the faculty; but the men liked him, and he evidently had some knowledge both of medicine and of surgery, as well as more

than an average share of judgment and discrimination. As a preliminary measure, he at once installed himself in the entire management of all culinary arrangements for the sick, who now got wholesome and nutritious messes very much to their taste, though they could not always tell what the said messes were made of. With regard to the wounded, cleanliness and poulticing were our doctor's chief resources; and with these appliances, in the absence of more regular aid, all the patients seemed to be doing well. Much of the amelioration, which he attributed to his remedies, I could not help imputing to the dietary. Meanwhile, I went on, writing savage and ineffectual letters for a surgeon, though somewhat consoled by the reflection that matters proceeded no worse in the interim.

But M. le Tisanier was ambitious; he was also a man of an active mind, and ever in pursuit of some new object of interest and occupation. He had concocted, and in due time he communicated to me confidentially, a grand scheme. It was no less than this: that he, M. le Tisanier, in addition to the superintendence of the hospital, should take upon himself the management of our private kitchen, actually administered by the Padre; in other words, that he, superseding the Padre, should daily cook the dinner for himself, the Padre, and me.

The scheme came out one evening after the Padre had retired to rest, as we were seated *al*

fresco, enjoying a cool cigar, with the intention of soon following the Padre's example. M. le Tisanier opened the subject with very little preamble, by politely informing me that the French *cuisine* beat that of all other nations out of the field; that the Gascons were decidedly the best cooks in France, and that he beat all the cooks in Gascony. He proceeded to remark that we had flour, milk, eggs, bacon, lard, game, mutton, pork, and goats' flesh in abundance, with occasional supplies of very available beef; and with such materials, besides others which he enumerated, he felt, he owned, ambitious (admitting the undeniable merits of the Padre) to show what his own talents could accomplish in the department of *la haute cuisine*.

I pause not to detail by what means he gradually brought his plans to bear. It was a delicate business; for the Padre conceived that he himself understood these matters as well as most men; and for my own part, I was so well satisfied with things as they were, that I felt no wish for a change. The Padre was great at an *olla podrida*, his omelets were capital, and he had once given us a boiled turkey stuffed with chestnuts. (Boil the chestnuts separate, and pound in a mortar. Flavour with the lean of ham or bacon dry-baked and grated.) My French friend, however, had a purchase on the Padre as his medical adviser, in which office he now was fully installed, and had entirely won the

Padre's confidence. Availing himself of this advantage, he introduced first one dish, then a second, till at length he gradually established himself in the superintendence of our kitchen, ostensibly operating under the Padre's direction, but ultimately having pretty much his own way.

The result of this arrangement was, that when the Padre and I went out on our daily excursions in pursuit of game, M. le Tisanier generally remained at home, dividing his morning between the hospital, to which he attended first, and our dinner for three, which he always had in a forward state when we returned from shooting. Sometimes, however, he rose early to roam the lowlands near the village in search of culinary roots and herbs, bringing home also innumerable varieties of the mushroom, with none of which we were poisoned.

CHAPTER VIII.

We are now fast arriving, benignant reader, at that point of our narrative when the plot begins to thicken. It may nevertheless be here as well to inform you, that the Padre having one morning set out early on a visit to Vittoria, and not being expected back till night, M. le Tisanier had, with his usual grandiloquence and urbanity, formally announced an intention on his part to avail himself of the opportunity to give me an ENGLISH dinner.

Abstaining from any detailed account of this splendid, and to me very novel banquet—for I never sat down to such an English dinner before, and probably never shall again, even in Paris—let me at any rate dwell a moment, with fond recollections which two and forty years have not obliterated, on the *entrée* of roast-beef. For the basis of his operations in elaborating this truly British dish, M. le Tisanier, who scorned to receive a suggestion even from an Englishman on the subject of roast-beef, had selected a considerable portion of the *round*! The culinary preparation of this block or clump of raw meat he commenced some hours before it was to come on the table, by placing it on a gridiron in a dish, and thrusting it into a very hot oven, where he kept it only till it was thoroughly heated through, and a little scorched on the outside. Then, drawing it out, he transferred it before my astonished eyes into a boiler, with a view to soup! In the boiler, however, it was not allowed to boil, but only to simmer—nay, scarcely that. After experiencing, for how many hours I did not count, this gradual and very leisurely process of concoction, maturation, and digestion, the beef was withdrawn from the boiler, and again temporarily deposited, for final browning, in the oven. From the oven it came direct to table, smoking hot, and streaming like Ida, from its summit to its base, with a rich and very appetising sauce, of which all

I can positively state is, that one ingredient was toasted shreds of onion. Certainly it was not English roast-beef; but it ate very tender, and was altogether unexceptionable. I was therefore able to do ample justice to this artistic achievement of M. le Tisanier, who watched me with anxious eagerness, and professed himself more than a thousand times repaid for the labours of the morning by my unqualified commendations, and the activity of my knife and fork. A plum-pudding was to follow; but that, alas! proved a failure. Just as the beef was removed, and I all expectation, Francisco, to my no small consternation, brought in soup-plates and spoons! Exactly as it occurred on another memorable occasion, M. le Tisanier had forgotten the cloth. That day we had no plum-pudding, but we had very respectable plum-porridge.

It was in the cool of the same evening that we stepped out from the dining-room into the open air, each blowing a cigar, and stood at the front entrance of the house. Our position afforded us a view up and down the road, so that no person could enter the village at either extremity without our perceiving it. Suddenly M. le Tisanier threw up both his hands, and clasped them with a cry of agony.

“Ah,” he cried, “Frenchmen!—look!—prisoners!—my countrymen!—they are lost!—they are doomed!—they will be all massacred!”

True enough, a party was approaching, of which four, it was too evident, were prisoners, and Frenchmen.

The whole company was on foot. The four prisoners marched two and two, their hands tied behind by cords connected with a rope extending from the front pair to the rear. They had their side-arms, knapsacks, and accoutrements; but their muskets were carried by the peasants who escorted them.

"Go in," said I to M. le Tisanier. "Leave this little affair to me. Go in-doors, I entreat you. Manifest no sympathy, or all is lost."

With all his volatility and rodomontade, M. le Tisanier showed on this occasion that he wanted neither tact nor feeling. The affair sufficiently explained itself. The four Frenchmen, having fallen into the hands of the exasperated peasantry, under ordinary circumstances would have been hanged or shot off-hand. But the Padre being looked up to by the whole district, not only as a spiritual guide but as a great guerilla chief and military commander, they were brought to his abode, in order that justice might be done upon them in more regular form.

Advancing up the road in sullen silence, the whole company, captives and captors, arrived in front of our billet, and there halted. My first object was to get the prisoners into my own keeping.

"Any taken alive besides these four?" I asked.

"No, Señor Capitan," replied an elderly countryman. "These are the only prisoners out of a hundred or more. In their attempt to escape into France, they got into this neighbourhood, or there would have been no prisoners at all. Will Don José be here soon?"

"The reverend Padre," I replied, "went this morning to Vittoria, and will not be home till late. You can, if you please, leave the prisoners here in custody. By the by, why have you left them their side-arms?"

I stepped up to the captives as if with the idea of removing their accoutrements, and communicated with one of them by a consolatory glance, to which he responded by a look of intelligence — pitiful enough, to be sure.

"Oh, I see," said I. "Their hands being tied, the belts cannot come off. What will you do with the prisoners till Don José returns? If they remain here, they will be safest in the great room at the top of the house."

So it was settled. From the certainty that the prisoners, if at large, would speedily fall a sacrifice to the vengeance of the enraged population, there was no fear of their attempting to escape. They were accordingly marched up-stairs, still bound, however, and held together by the cord, and were locked up in a large room with little windows, which occupied the whole upper floor of the build-

ing. Their muskets also were deposited on the premises. The captors then separated for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

The coast being clear, I was ascending the staircase with the key of the attic, which was now a prison, when M. le Tisanier burst out upon me from his own apartment on the first floor! Poor little man, he was in tears. He seized my hand.

"Ah," said he, "my poor countrymen! If they remain, they will be murdered—butchered—massacred! If they escape, they will never reach the frontier!"

"Depend upon it," said I, "their only chance is to stay where they are, though in the lion's den. It will be no easy matter for us to save their lives; but whatever can be done, we will do. You had better come up."

The prisoners, bound as they were, had contrived to seat themselves on the floor, and, on our entering, raised themselves with some difficulty on their legs. I was struck with their martial bearing, even in misfortune.

My own hand and M. le Tisanier's simultaneously plunged into our respective pockets. The cords which bound the prisoners' wrists soon yielded to our knives. This operation was not effected with-

out an immense deal of *parlez-vous* between the prisoners and M. le Tisanier. It transpired, in the course of the conference, that these four soldiers, so far as they were aware, were the only survivors of 150 or 180 men, who, as an advanced guard, had preceded a column of some 3000 of the French army on their march to the frontier.

I now addressed them. "Surrounded as you are with Spaniards, with no British force at hand, you doubtless are aware of your actual position."

"Yes, yes," they answered; "we understand."

"Then," said I, "let me most earnestly entreat you to avoid any indiscretion which might augment the risks that surround you. You must be contented to remain where you are for the night, and be satisfied with straw for bedding. This gentleman is a French officer. Will you be guided by him and by me?"

"Yes, sir, yes," they replied.

"What's in the larder?" said I to M. le Tisanier. "Got anything to give these hungry fellows?"

"Hah!" replied he, "I shall instantly proceed to prepare them a superb repast. Let me see; in three hours——"

"Better," said I, "give them at once the remainder of the beef and bread *à discretion*. To-morrow you can cook them a regular good breakfast."

"Pardon me," said a French soldier, whose hollow cheek and sunken though fiery eye too clearly

indicated his recent sufferings and privations ; " we have a still more urgent want. Oh ! M. l'officier, if you please, water ! Those —— Spaniards never think of giving a poor miserable prisoner a drop to drink, and we were too proud to ask. We are half-dead with thirst."

M. le Tisanier skipped out of the room and shot down-stairs ; and I, on his return with a capacious pitcher, left him in charge of his countrymen, taking with me, however, their sidearms and ammunition, which I deposited with their firelocks in my own apartment. My motive will presently appear.

Night drew on. The Padre, I began to calculate, would soon be back from Vittoria. What was to be done ? By what rhetoric was the Padre to be persuaded not only into sparing the lives of the four prisoners, but into protecting them from his exasperated countrymen ?

Perhaps it will here be asked, Why did I not take my proper ground as a British officer ? Instead of trusting to the contingency of getting to the blind side of a vindictive and sanguinary partisan, would it not have been more dignified to insist upon the laws of civilised warfare, to stigmatise the proposed butchery as atrocious, and to demand the lives of the captives as a tribute to humanity ?

To this I reply : The position was peculiar, and I was more intent upon saving the prisoners than upon maintaining my own dignity. Be it remem-

bered there were no British forces within call : with the exception of my few sick men in hospital, I was the only Englishman in the village or neighbourhood. Those sick men had indeed their fire-arms, but they had not a round of ammunition each ; besides which, most of them were prostrate, either from casualties or from exhaustion, and there was not one of their whole number whom I should have felt justified in turning out on duty. It was clear, then, had I made a demand, and had the demand been resisted, that I possessed no power to enforce it. Nay, should it only once transpire among the peasantry that I was operating to save the prisoners, so excited at that period was the general feeling against the French, the whole population of the neighbourhood would probably assemble *en masse*, and cut short the discussion by proceeding to summary execution. Under these circumstances, I determined, in the first instance, to try fair means, well knowing that if I could gain the Padre, his authority with his countrymen would suffice—yet fully aware that the negotiation was no easy one, and that I must prepare for the possible alternative of an angry collision.

CHAPTER X.

A little after nightfall, the Padre, in a remarkably amiable temper, returned from Vittoria. M. le

Tisanier, in a state of nervous anxiety, which he kept to himself as he was best able, tremulously tendered his eager energies in preparing whatever the Padre would prefer as an evening meal.

"Mil gracias," said the Padre. "Nothing, nothing whatever. Why, it's out of the question. You don't suppose I should go to Vittoria without dining with my own fraternity? I will merely join you in a cup of coffee and a cigar, and retire for the night."

Spaniards, let me observe, are accounted temperate; but they can make as good a dinner as any people on earth. After one such meal, however, they are in no hurry to take another.

Our coffee despatched, and our cigars in full process of combustion, I opened the conference.

"Well, Señor Padre, heard anything about the French?"

"Oh, yes," said he; "I was told all about them before I entered the village. So you have got them up-stairs? Quite right." The Padre, it was clear, misconceived my question.

"The four prisoners, you mean. Well," said I, "what do you intend to do with them?"

"To-morrow morning after breakfast," he replied, "send out a party of the villagers to dig a hole; after breakfast, march the prisoners to the spot, shoot them, and pitch them in."

M. le Tisanier summoned up all his nonchalance, but looked very pale.

"That, however, Señor Padre, is not the point to which my inquiry tended. Have you heard anything about the French forces and their movements?"

"French forces? Where?" he asked.

"In this immediate neighbourhood," replied I.

"How can that be?" said he. "I understood from my informant that the four prisoners up-stairs were the only survivors of the whole party."

"True," said I; "of their own party they are. But that party was merely an advanced guard. The main body, three thousand strong, is following on the same line of march, and in all likelihood will pass close to us; nay, very possibly occupy this village for a day or two, and pass through it."

"Indeed!" said the Padre, rising from his easy-chair. "If that is so, we must not wait for to-morrow. Justice must be done on the prisoners this night. The village must be roused without loss of time."

M. le Tisanier turned paler than ever, and began to look dangerous. He was about to spring from his seat, but with a look of entreaty I kept him quiet.

"First, Señor Padre," said I, "a word with you, if you please. Come, sit down again for a moment, and hear what I have got to say."

The Padre resumed his arm-chair.

"You intend, then," I continued, "to shoot these

prisoners, though aware that the French forces are close at hand. Of course you are prepared for the consequences."

"What consequences?" said the Padre, with a look of surprise. "I see no need that the French should know anything about it. Should they come here in force, I shall of course accommodate as many of the officers as I can, and give them the best entertainment the house affords."

"But in all probability," said I, "the French *will* know it. For example, should I unfortunately fall into their hands—and, having invalids in charge, I shall not attempt to escape till the last moment—you cannot expect me to conceal a transaction I so decidedly disapprove. Besides that, my men in hospital would be sure to know it, and their disapproval would be as strong as mine. Now, in case the French come here, even should I get off, there are some among my invalids whom it would be impossible to remove. Therefore, make up your mind. If you will shoot your prisoners, I cannot prevent it. Shoot them, but be prepared to have it known."

"Very good," said the Padre doggedly. "I *have* made up my mind. The wrongs of Spain, our plundered cities, our ravaged fields, my slaughtered countrymen, all demand their blood. They must die."

"Of course, then," said I, "you are quite secure

that you will yourself escape. If they catch you, they will hang you like a dog."

"After the massacre of the French prisoners in the south," said M. le Tisanier, "several reverend padres were caught and hanged. Two near Seville, to my certain knowledge."

"They are welcome to hang me if they can catch me," said the Padre.

"No doubt," I added, "you have also prepared a place of security, and the means of flight for the females of the village."

"Highly necessary, from what I witnessed near Seville," said M. le Tisanier; "indispensable!"

"Ah, as for them," replied the Padre, still unshaken, "they are soon packed off. The alcalde will see to that."

"Ah, I wish," said I, trying a new tack, "the houses and the furniture could be packed off as easily. The village would infallibly be plundered and set fire to. This house, in particular, being your residence, would be ransacked and burnt to the ground as a matter of course."

"As a matter of course," said M. le Tisanier; "ransacked and burnt to the ground. That is precisely what was done to the houses of the padres who were hanged near Seville."

There was something in this last thrust which evidently touched the Padre nearer than all our previous pokes. He looked anxious.

"If, then, I execute the prisoners," said he, "do you really think, in case of the French coming here, that this house would be burnt down?"

"Beyond a doubt," we both replied.

"Ransacked?" he asked tremulously.

"Ransacked from attic to cellar—guttled." (Both as before.)

The Padre was obviously staggered.

"The proprietors of this house," he said, as if conferring with himself, "are most highly respectable people. I have the utmost possible regard for them. They have already suffered dreadfully from the war."

Whether the interests of the proprietors were the Padre's only motive, or whether, as I suspected, he had any further stake in the premises, we now saw our advantage. The Padre was clearly in a fix. So, having the best of the argument, we for a while held our peace, leaving him to work out the problem for himself. It was manifestly a settled principle in his mind, that the house must suffer neither conflagration nor spoil.

"If the prisoners should be spared?" said he. Hurrah! the day was our own.

"Well, Señor Padre," said I, "the case stands thus: I did not like to urge the circumstance at first, because I wished to discuss this question with you as a matter of discretion, and not as a mere point of etiquette between you and me. But, strictly

speaking, the prisoners are not yours. By the laws of war, they are mine."

"I should like to know how you prove that," he replied. "You laid claim to our friend the doctor here, because you had received his surrender; and I admitted the plea. But on what principle you can possibly claim the four Frenchmen up-stairs, I am utterly unable to understand or conceive. They were captured by Spaniards, and they were brought here by Spaniards. Your laws of war, as you call them, are really too much for my weak comprehension."

"The point," said I, "is a nice one, I admit. But observe. Your countrymen took them, and conducted them to your residence. Granted. Not, however, as prisoners of war, but as culprits, as criminals, as victims. Proof: they arrived tied together in a string. As victims, as culprits, as criminals you yourself regarded them, and were about to deal with them. Consequently, they are neither your prisoners of war, nor your countrymen's. That they are, however, my prisoners is sufficiently evident from this; that it was I—not your people—who completed their disarmament. The practical evidence of this you may see with your own eyes in my chamber, where their side-arms and ammunition, which I myself took from their persons, are at this moment deposited. And as to the abstract question, that is fully discussed, and

for ever set at rest, by Hugo Grotius, in the seventh volume of his *Pandects*, section 123, folio edition, Warsaw, 1715."

"And pray who was Hugo Grotius?" asked the Padre.

"A great saint," said M. le Tisanier. The Padre reverently doffed his bonnet.

"The point, as you observe," said the Padre, "is indeed a very nice one. But now, in respect to my house—that is, the house in which I reside, this house—the sacking and burning——"

"Exactly," said M. le Tisanier; "in respect to the sacking and burning of your house, the case is palpable. Whatever escaped the pillagers would perish in the flames." The Padre crossed himself.

"That," said I, "is precisely the point to which I was coming. On the one hand, your house may be sacked and burnt; on the other, it may escape uninjured."

"You think, then," said the Padre anxiously, "that possibly the house may be saved, even if the French occupy the village in force?"

"What I think is this," I replied,—“that in case the French come here, as very probably they will within the next eight-and-forty hours, should the four French soldiers in the attic be regarded as my prisoners, and not as your prisoners, it will be so much the better for both you and the house.”

"Admirable!" cried M. le Tisanier; "your prison-

ers, and not the Padre's! What a splendid disentanglement of our difficulty! My own ingenuity, though I frankly admit it to be inexhaustible, could not have suggested a more perfect solution."

"But how can we manage to have them regarded as your prisoners, and not as mine?" asked the Padre. "Poor fellows! I really feel for them."

"Nothing more easy," I replied. "Treat them from this moment as they would be treated by the English. Spare their lives as a matter of course. Not only that: exercise your authority to make them safe with the people of the village; and let them not want for meat and drink."

"Have they been fed to-night?" said he.

"They snore," said M. le Tisanier.

"Very good," said the Padre. "To-morrow I will give them a sheep."

"Aha!" said M. le Tisanier, collapsing into a reverie, "that will make—let me see—bouillon, of course; consommé—cotelettes—two gigots——"

"Gentlemen," yawned the Padre, "I wish you both a very good night."

CHAPTER XI.

Next morning I was reminded by the Padre that before he started for Vittoria we had agreed to spend the early part of the day in one of our usual

country rambles. His object, however, in mentioning the project, was not to propose its execution, but rather to suggest that, under existing circumstances, we had better remain at home. Tidings might reach the village that the French were approaching, in which case it certainly was undesirable that either he or I should be out of the way. The same thought had occurred to my own mind, and we agreed, for that day, to abandon our excursion.

I was sorry to learn from Francisco after breakfast, that M. le Tisanier, on his way through the village to the convent, had been grossly insulted, nay, menaced, and even pelted with stones. It appeared, in fact, that the villagers, though they submitted to the reprieve of the four prisoners in deference to the Padre's mandate, were anything but pleased with this arrangement. Even with the peril before their eyes of prompt and heavy retaliation, the blind impulse of revenge still urged them on to a deed of blood, irrespective of consequences; and their savage disappointment, it appeared, had vented its first effervescence on M. le Tisanier, whom, though protected by the Padre, they deemed quite sufficiently hateful in his ostensible character of half a Frenchman. However that might be, the reported insult to M. le Tisanier was not a thing to be overlooked; so (having denounced the outrage to the Padre) I followed him to the hospital, dis-

charging broadsides of jobation right and left as I passed through the village.

I had for some time been gratified by observing, in my daily visits to the sick, that in the absence of a regular surgeon they appeared generally, as already mentioned, to be making a very satisfactory progress under M. le Tisanier's treatment, medical and dietetic. This day, however, things were looking better still; I found my patients not only cheerful, but merry. This was the case with all the men. Even those who still kept their beds had either a smile on their face, or a grin. But going out, without being observed, into a portico where three or four convalescents were seated on a bench, I overheard, as they chatted together with much festivity, remarks which satisfied me that the general mirth had its origin in something quite out of the usual course.

"I say, Bill, she's a prime un; ain't she, though?"

"Ha, ha! Owny think of that 'ere little Frinchman."

"Easy enough for the old un to pass *har*-self off for a he, cos she's got a beard. Ha, ha, ha!"

"And sitch a pair of mishtayshers, too! Oh my eye!"

The general guffaw which followed this last sally was interrupted by my advance. But not wishing to investigate what I could easily discover by other means, and was sure to know in the end, I con-

tented myself, although not without feeling some curiosity, with making a few ordinary inquiries as on other days, and passed on to a different part of the building.

The intelligent reader will hardly need to be informed that my attention was directed, by the remarks which I had just overheard, to M. le Tisanier and his "two wounded Spaniards." I had seen them but once, and had noticed them but little. The one with a slung arm was, as far as I could recollect, a somewhat elderly personage; the other, whose head was bandaged, the bandage partly concealing the eyes and face also, had all the appearance of a slight, pale lad of fifteen or sixteen. Both, I now called to mind, rode into the village on their donkeys seated side-ways. But this is a practice so common to the two sexes in the Spanish peninsula, that the circumstance had not excited my attention. M. le Tisanier had suggested, when the arrangement was discussed between him and me for the disposal of these "wounded Spaniards," that, as the manners and habits of Spaniards and Englishmen are so different, it would be best to give them an apartment in the hospital by themselves; to which I had assented, as a matter of course. From that moment I had left the care of them to him, and had seen them no more. This morning, however, in passing along a corridor which led by their apartment, I could not but re-

mark that I heard what sounded exceedingly like a female voice, and a musical one too.

Not long after, while meditating on this very amusing discovery, and drawing the obvious conclusion that it afforded an eligible opportunity for poking fun at my lively and talented friend, M. le Tisanier, I was joined by that gentleman himself, and immediately expressed my unfeigned regret at the annoyance which he had that morning suffered in the village. He made light of it; and while we were still conversing on the subject, Francisco arrived with a message from the Padre, to the effect that, we might depend upon it, nothing of the kind should again occur, and M. le Tisanier might pass and repass through the village with perfect security.

CHAPTER XII.

Arm-in-arm with M. le Tisanier on our way back to the billet, I commenced operations. "Under your kind and judicious treatment, my sick men are making most satisfactory progress. But your two Spanish patients—how are they getting on?"

He. "Oh, as well as can be expected. Among the English wounded, however" (M. le Tisanier evidently wished to change the subject), "there is one who eminently demands the utmost resources of my skill and enlarged experience."

I. "Many thanks for your invaluable services. By the by, with regard to these two Spaniards, as I draw rations for them in common with the other inmates of my hospital, I think I ought to see them."

He. "Don't for the world think of adding to your daily fatigues on their account. You yourself are by no means in full health. I only wish you would place yourself under my treatment. That bullet which now lies flattened behind the tibia of your left leg, bah! in three days I would make you a present of it—actually put it in your hand. In a week I would have you better in health than you ever were in your life. Better? Ten, fifteen, twenty centigrades above perfectly well! How do you feel to-day?"

"Not a bad device that," thought I, "with a view to changing the conversation." For men feel ever grateful to the ear that will listen to their ailments, and readily abandon any subject besides, to converse about their own morbid symptoms.

I. "Thank you, thank you; never felt better than I feel at this moment. Were my case worthy of your skill—that is, what is commonly called a hopeless one—allow me, on such a supposition, to consider your professional services as engaged. Now I think of it, in a day or two I must report to Vittoria, and of course must return your Spanish patients among the wounded. Was it a smart

affair? You have never told me the particulars. When were they wounded?—where?”

He. “Ha! You know how my countrymen can fight. But headed by me” (whistles and kisses his hand), “oh, it was elegant! They outdid themselves! Mars? Bellona? Bagatelle! Hold; I will in the first place describe the locality.”

I. “Better sketch it on paper, when we get indoors. So it was in this affair, then, that your two Spaniards received their wounds. Serious?”

He (speaking as if conjecturally). “I calculate that about the time when I shall have the pleasure of quitting this place in your agreeable company, they also will be in a condition to leave the hospital.”

Scarcely smothering a laugh, I halted, and, half turning, looked M. le Tisanier in the face.

“Tell me,” said I, “were you never wounded?”

In the course of the next few seconds, as he marked the expression of my countenance, his own features underwent a series of remarkable and comical transitions. At length, suddenly calm, but with deep feeling, he said in a serious voice, “Ah, M. le Capitaine, you have, I perceive, discovered my secret.” Then with a burst of ardour, one hand grasping mine, the other on his heart. “Oui, Monsieur! j’ai le cœur, comme une pelote, tout épinglé de dards!”

“You perceive,” said I, “that we phlegmatic

Englishmen, who do nothing, as you facetiously remarked the other day, but walk with our eyes fixed on the tips of our own noses, can see as far into a millstone as other people."

"Ah," cried he in a sudden panic, "but does the Padre know? In that case we are lost! undone!"

"The Padre," I replied, "at present knows nothing; nor do I think him, sharp as he is in his way, a likely person to make the discovery. For myself, you may rely on my secrecy, and, so far as a British officer can help you, on my co-operation. But come," said I, anticipating a gush of gratitude, "you have now no longer a motive for reserve; tell me your adventures. Are they really wounded?"

"Monsieur," he answered, "since they and I together made our escape from Madrid, not Seville, both my companions have been wounded at least a dozen times, and by that incident have saved my life as often."

He continued:—

"I was quartered at Madrid with my regiment, the ——— Voltigeurs, and was the accepted suitor of that young lady who now, with her nurse, is an inmate of your hospital, Doña Isidora, of noble family.

"After your little affair at Vittoria, when it was evident that nothing remained for our troops but to clear out of Spain by the shortest route, but before I actually started from Madrid, I was exposed on one occasion to imminent risks on duty beyond the

city's walls, from the fury of the fierce population ; and after a daring attack, in which many of their number fell, and most of ours, I escaped in reality by that expedient of which you only witnessed the fiction ; in short, I did actually tend some wounded Spaniards ; and thus purchasing immunity, bringing them with me into the city, and using them as a pass, I contrived to get back, though not without difficulty, to the headquarters of my regiment.

“Subsequently, as our troops began to leave for the frontiers, it became palpable that not even in the city itself was there safety for a Frenchman. Yet how could I escape ? My life was daily threatened by the populace ; but how tear myself from her to whom I had already plighted my faith, and who was dearer to me, infinitely dearer, than life itself ? She saw my perplexity. But not only that ; her penetrating and anxious mind took a correct and prescient view of all the difficulties of my position. Nay, more ; she devised a plan for my preservation. She knew of my former escape, and the mode of it. In an instant, her resolution was fixed—she announced her project. She, Monsieur, she herself would go with me. She, disguised as a guerilla, would be my wounded charge ; and I, aided by that double personation, would escape with her into France.

“What could I say ? If I remained longer in Madrid, my life was the forfeit. If I escaped alone,

I lost her for ever. Doubtful how to act, tormented with hesitation and anxiety, I deferred my departure to the last moment, and was more than once maltreated in the streets. What in a few days decided me was the discovery that Doña Isidora herself, known as the affianced of a hated Frenchman, was exposed to no small risk, we will not say of death, but, at any rate, of severity, perhaps imprisonment. Finally, all was settled. Doña Isidora communicated the plot to her faithful nurse, who the more readily became a party because, from her office in the family, she herself had already found herself exposed to obloquy and threats.

"We set out, my two companions in the dress of Spanish peasants, I habited as you saw me when we met; the nurse with her arm in a sling, Doña Isidora with a bandage round her head; which latter disguise I myself suggested, as partially serving the purposes of concealment. You saw in her, exhausted as she was with travel and privation, a pallid boy. You shall see her again, in her proper habiliments, radiant with all the lustre of Spanish beauty; the nobility of her nature, as well as of her lineage, impressed on her visage, and beaming in her eyes.

"On the journey from Madrid to this village, our sufferings were incredible; so were my escapes. Disguised though I was, occasionally I was recognised as a Frenchman, and owed my safety to the

ever-ready plea, devised and supplied by her whom I must ever account my guardian angel, that I had tended the hurts of Spaniards wounded in mortal combat, that I still had them medically in charge, and that therefore I must perforce be regarded and dealt with as a friend and not as a foe.

“Sometimes the plea barely proved available. In my own estimation, I was a dead man more than once. However, after all our risks and all our sufferings, here we are. Not long before we reached this place, I fell in with a distressed countryman of yours, the soldier I brought with me. Of him also I took charge, mounting him on my own mule, and walking by his side. Do not thank me for this; I deserve no thanks; for, from the more friendly feeling with which the natives view the English, it all told in my favour. We discovered that there was a British officer in this village. I am thankful that we succeeded in reaching it, and shall never forget your kindness, both on our arrival and subsequently.

“And now, M. le Capitaine, you have heard my tale. But, oh! what can I say of that young, that tender, that lovely partner of my perils, who, with heroic and unflinching endurance, with admirable tact, with generous devotion, has so far piloted me in safety on my homeward route, and who has risked, nay, is still risking, all to preserve my life?”

I could only answer, "Generous indeed!" To say the truth, I was so deeply affected, not only with the narrative itself, but with the perfectly simple, manly, straightforward, but, at the same time, feeling and earnest style of the narrator, that "Generous indeed!" were the only words I could trust myself to utter, without risking a greater display of emotion than Englishmen usually consider in good taste.

Suddenly falling back into his ordinary mode of speech, "There is but one return that I can make," he added,—“there is but one acknowledgment. That will be a tribute indeed! That will be a sublime sacrifice, worthy at once of her merit, and of my gratitude! That will eternally and adequately record my debt, and its discharge! That will set her on the pedestal which her merit claims! That will secure to her an eternal niche in the temple of renown! Ah! that which thousands of women have vainly wished me to do, will I do for her! I will confer on her that elevation to which she is entitled by her virtues! I will make her—yes, I will make her—Madame le Tisanier.”

CHAPTER XIII.

On arriving at our billet, we there found the Padre, who expressed his profound regrets at the

insult offered by the villagers to my companion, and repeated his assurance that nothing of the kind should happen again.

"Señor Padre," said I, "that is hardly sufficient. I think that people who misconduct themselves as the villagers have done, should be made sensible of their error by stringent measures."

"This time let it pass," said M. le Tisanier. "Should the same thing happen again, I shall hold the Alcalde responsible, and shall invite him" (M. le T. twists his moustache) "to a promenade outside the village."

The Padre was in a little bit of a fidget. We had come upon him in the kitchen, with a ladle on the stove, and sleeves turned up. He was casting bullets.

"No news of this French column," said he; "I have been waiting about here, expecting intelligence all the morning."

"Why not send out some of the villagers?" I asked. "They might pick up information."

"Señor Capitan," he replied, "I have thought of a better plan than that. You and I were to have gone out shooting to day. Suppose we go to-morrow morning."

"With much pleasure," said I; "but what are we to effect by that?"

"We will take a new direction," he replied. "We will not go northwards, as hitherto; we will go

southwards. This will bring us towards the point from which the enemy are approaching. We may obtain tidings; perhaps we may get a sight of them."

"You must be guide, then," I answered. "Of course, you know the ground."

"Trust me for that," said he. "I will not take you by the direct route across the open plain. We will strike off to the right, and skirt the foot of the hills."

"Why go over rough ground, in preference to level?" I asked.

"Ah," said he, "you are, I perceive, a novice in guerilla warfare. Regular tactics are your line. If they caught sight of us on the open plain, don't you see they would be sure to overtake and capture us? If we have the hills on our flank, cannot we at any time escape up the rocks and gullies? They are not likely to follow us there. If they do, at any rate, I promise you some beautiful shooting."

"Let alone a little blood-letting among the thorn-bushes," said I; "trousers in tatters, and our beasts rolling heels over head down all sorts of places."

"We must go on foot," he replied.

"Very good," said I; "you know best. Only recollect my left leg is in far better walking order for half-a-league than for half-a-dozen. Suppose I knock up?"

"Chito! then I will carry you on my back."

“Be it so,” said I, inwardly determining to drop dead tired for the fun of the thing, and take a spell out of the Padre as long as I found it pleasant. “Then to-morrow after breakfast——”

“We must start before breakfast,” said the Padre.

Supposing the enemy at hand, it really was desirable to know what they were about. So I ended by assenting, with one proviso, to all the Padre’s propositions. The proviso was, that in the interval we received no intelligence sufficiently conclusive of itself, and rendering our reconnoissance superfluous.

CHAPTER XIV.

No intelligence arrived, and early next morning we set out to seek the foe. M. le Tisanier was up betimes to see us off. “Expect to see me return,” said I, “in a state of absolute exhaustion and immense inanition, with heels hanging down over the Padre’s shoulders. In pity have a good dinner ready.”

“I shall be prepared for you,” said M. le Tisanier.

“Of course you feel easy,” said I to the Padre as we went along, “respecting the four Frenchmen.”

“No fear about them,” replied the Padre. “They know it is their safety to keep quiet; and if they come to any harm, it will be their own act. If they

attempt to move, or even show themselves abroad, they will be shot down *luego, luego.*"

Our ramble proved well worth taking for its own sake; but we saw no Frenchmen, and very little game. The Padre was fortunate, and bagged a fox. My success was but scanty in respect to hares and partridges. After a long detour through a wild and very thinly inhabited district, and a few calls at scattered cottages or rather hovels, the abode of a rough and noble peasantry, all of whom received the Padre with profound veneration, and me as his companion with high Spanish courtesy, we reached at length a village which we had agreed to make the extreme limit of our excursion. Still obtaining no intelligence, we set out, after resting, on our return. We now, however, took the direct route over the plain, and found our journey homeward far more agreeable than our journey out. There was a point on which I deemed it requisite to obtain information, and the Padre being in a remarkably conversable vein, the present seemed a good opportunity.

"You mentioned," said I, "that the proprietors of your abode were worthy people. I should be sorry, for their sakes, if the house received damage from the enemy."

He. "It is not altogether for their sakes that I wish to preserve the house."

I. "Of course, not altogether. Your own property—your own effects——"

He. "I have no property ; I have no effects ; I have nothing. It is a rule of my order. I am under a vow of poverty. No, no ; my wish springs from a principle of honour."

I. "Just what I should feel towards my own landlord. But you say it is not on your landlord's account."

He. "It is on account of the fraternity of which I am an unworthy member."

I. "Oh, oh ! then your fraternity have an interest in the premises?"

He. "Not exactly in the building itself, but in its contents. The fact is, our convent—— but I forget. You, as a heret—— pardon me ; you, as an Englishman, can have no acquaintance with our regulations. I will just explain. Our poor indigent community has some trifling property in lands, principally vineyards. I am their factor. That house is one of our dépôts."

I. "Very good wine, too, the growth of your estates. Little did I imagine, while seated with you at table, or puffing a cigar, that we were sipping the property of the Church."

He. "You may say smoking as well as sipping. The cigars also are the property of our humble fraternity."

I. "Well, I like that idea of a vow of poverty amazingly. You don't intend to convert me?"

He (benignantly). "One thing at a time. As to

the wine we drink, you mistake, however, if you suppose that is the wine we grow. The wine grown on our lands is the *ordinario* sort—abundant, indeed, as to quantity, and in that respect valuable; but not of a sort fit to be drunk by my order. No, no; we exchange it for better. For example, what you have been drinking I trust you will admit is a good sound wine."

I. "As good a Spanish red wine as I ever tasted;"—and it was no compliment.

He. "Yes, yes; and we sometimes exchange for foreign wines. Would that you had been here before the branch convent, which is now your hospital, was ransacked by the French. Have I not good reason for shooting a Frenchman whenever I can? Ah, I would have given you such a bottle of bordeaux! And port! As good port as you can drink in the Peninsula, and far better than you ever are likely to drink in your own country."

I. "And so it is you who have the management of all this. Surely it must give you no end of trouble."

He. "Trouble? It is my business. Besides that, it is a duty I owe my fraternity, consequently a duty of my profession. As to trouble, my only real trouble is in running foreign goods from the coast, or across the frontiers. I certainly do sometimes find a little trouble in that. But why should

I complain? After all, it is exciting, and so far a pleasure. A man of my cloth ought always to be contented."

I. "French goods?"

He. "French goods and English. French, across the Pyrenees; English, from the shores of the Mediterranean and Bay of Biscay. We sell again at a very fair profit—moderate as becomes our order, but fair nevertheless."

I. "A heavy deduction though the fiscal exactions of your government, no doubt?"

"Fiscal?" he exclaimed, frowning horribly. "Fiscal? Do you think me, in managing the concerns of my venerable brotherhood, capable of such a dereliction of principle—do you consider me such an ass as to permit any deduction like that? Why, if we conducted our little business subject to fiscal obstructions, we might as well have no management at all. Señor Capitan, although this conversation was brought on by a remark on your part, the subject is one on which I have long wished to confer with you confidentially, and I thank you for the opportunity. And now let me bespeak your kind, benevolent offices on behalf of my self-denying humble brethren. As I said before, we profess poverty, we have nothing. Charitable laics, touched by our dependent and destitute condition, have from time to time bequeathed us trifles of landed property, which we

frugally farm to the best advantage, taking the chance—you know it is a toss-up—of profit or loss. The produce, when realised, we turn to account as well as our poor opportunities permit; and my object is to supplicate your best offices in behalf of our little store in the village, which, as well as one or two others in different localities, is under my charge and responsibility. Some damage our store has suffered already. After the plunder of the convent by the French, your own troops, on their arrival in the village, found their way into the cellar of the house, and were beginning to make free with the wine, when you happily arrived, and order was soon restored. All I ask is, that as long as you remain here, or have influence in this neighbourhood, you will kindly give our depôt the benefit of your protection, so far as you may be able. I ask it, not only on my own account, but for the sake of my venerable brethren. Our wants are few. The French silks and English prints we sell for what we can get. We also drive a trifling business in English cutlery, and French *quincaillerie*. The poor must do something to live. As to the convent in Vittoria, I forward to it from time to time, as best I can, and when I have got them, only little supplies of such common necessities as bordeaux, port, champagne, sherry, French brandy when I can get it good, sardines, gruyère cheese, caviar, vermicelli, macaroni, spicery, Dutch herrings, maraschino, Ham-

burg sausages, and a few other little knicknackeries not worth enumerating. Our wants are few."

Had liberal Spain, when she laid hands on the property of the religious orders, gone through as she began, made a clean work of it, and reformed ALL that we consider the errors and abuses of Romanism, I, as an ardent Protestant, should have cordially rejoiced. But merely to confiscate endowments, and to leave other things as they are, is a different thing. There can be no doubt of it, that at the beginning of this century, when Napoleon I. attempted to make Spain a province of France, the Spanish clergy, by their influence with the nation, and by their success in maintaining the spirit of national resistance, were the saviours of their country. That these have been made the victims and the only victims of reform, is hard indeed.

I walked on, listening to the Padre's discourse with so much interest, that we arrived close upon our village before I recollected his promise of a lift, and my own fixed purpose of taking it out of him. We were now not a quarter of a mile from our journey's end; and I was beginning to muse, with complacent anticipation, on the capital dinner which M. le Tisanier was to have ready on our arrival, when we noticed Francisco coming down the lane to meet us.

As he approached with hasty strides, his visage

was clouded. He made an angry gesture, as if signalling us to halt.

"That endiablado doctor," said he, "(may his soul never see the inside of purgatory !) has armed the four Frenchmen, seized all the amunition in the village, and barricaded the house !"

CHAPTER XV.

We halted. As the tidings brought by Francisco deprived the Padre of utterance, I demanded particulars.

It appeared from Francisco's indignant statement that, subsequently to our departure, when M. le Tisanier, having made his preliminary arrangements for our dinner, had visited the hospitals, and was returning through the village, he was again set upon by the inhabitants. The villagers, taking advantage of the Padre's absence, surrounded and insulted him, menaced both him and the four prisoners with death, and pelted him with stones, one of which had taken effect, very much to the detriment of his physiognomy. On reaching home, however, he occupied himself as usual, without doing anything to excite suspicion ; but, after a while, he sent off Francisco with a message to the "two wounded Spaniards" at the convent, and with directions to await their further instructions.

After being detained a couple of hours, which he spent in the study of English, under the tuition of the convalescent soldiers, with whom Francisco was popular, the two Spaniards merely gave him directions to go home again, and he returned to the house.

On entering the kitchen, he was surprised to see what to all appearance was a dinner ready-cooked, arranged on a tray, and under covers. M. le Tisanier, pointing to the tray, bade him carry it to the Alcalde's, with a message that he himself would be there immediately. The Alcalde was from home; and Francisco, on coming out after leaving the tray, beheld in the street a spectacle which, as he elegantly expressed himself, "revolved his interior" (*revolvió-me las tripas*). Close at hand appeared, all bearing their muskets and fully accoutred, the four French soldiers, headed by M. le Tisanier, who marched *en militaire*, with his drawn sword sloped on his shoulder. This armed party, compelling him to return with them, entered the Alcalde's house, demanded all the arms on the premises, obtained a gun, a blunderbuss, a pair of Spanish rapiers, and a quantity of ammunition. They then, leaving behind them a basket which contained several bottles of the Padre's wine, went back to the house, which immediately on their entering they barricaded, leaving the astonished Francisco in the street.

The villagers noticed these proceedings with consternation, but had been taken by surprise, and were overawed by the military display. After the closing of the house, they assembled tumultuously in the street, and meditated all sorts of things. But M. le Tisanier, appearing at the window of an *entresuelo* (a closet or small chamber half-way upstairs), warned them to disperse if they did not wish to be fired upon; an admonition which they were the more readily induced to follow by a bullet that whistled over their heads. They then withdrew to their huts, anxiously watching the closed house, in which no movement was discernible, and expecting with much palpitation the Padre's return.

Francisco, recovering from his first surprise, had started off, he told us, in search of the Padre and me; but not knowing which way we had taken, assuming that we had followed our usual direction towards the shooting-ground, and being too much confused to make inquiries, he had covered a great deal of ground to no purpose, and had not got back to the village till a short time before our return.

"Santiago de Compostella!" gasped the Padre, at length recovering partially his senses and his breath, and dashing his bonnet on the ground. "For which of my many sins was I withheld from cutting that hangdog's throat the first moment that I set eyes on him! Santiago! *Trecientos mil diablos!*"

“Compose yourself, Señor Padre,” said I. “At least wait till we see how things look, and till we can judge for ourselves. If the Doctor has been menaced and assaulted, what wonder that he should place himself in security till our return? The business, according to my view of it, is not so serious as you appear to think.”

“Ah!” said the Padre, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead, “you are very kind. I totally forgot what I had just told you—that, with the exception of the wine, I had sent off all our stores to Vittoria.—Oh no! I mistake! Three dozen Lamego hams! Beautiful!—delicate! The choicest rarity in these parts! Oh, my Lamego hams! To think that the poor provision for my self-denying, self-mortifying, exemplary brethren should go to feed those hounds of Frenchmen!”

“Never mind,” I replied, still striving to tranquillise his agitated feelings; “should the worst come to the worst, we’ll have them out of that long before they finish your hams. But not to lose time, suppose I just step forward, and try the effects of a parley.”

CHAPTER XVI.

On approaching the house, which had now become a *plâce d’armes*, I saw no one stirring. Every shutter was closed. It was a square low building,

as old as the Moors, flat-roofed, solidly built of stone. Its little windows were high above the level of the ground. As I drew nigh, I remarked that the large massive door, which usually stood open all day, was, as well as the shutters, closed. Spanish-fashion, I took the liberty of kicking at the said door, in the absence of any such superfluities as bell or knocker. A voice responded over my head, "*Quien es?*" (Who is it?)

I looked up. At the window above, already indicated by Francisco's narrative, with an awfully damaged peeper, stood M. le Tisanier. He bowed politely.

"Ah!" said he. "So you have returned from your reconnaissance. Any intelligence of the French column? What sport to-day?"

Not choosing to answer the former of these inquiries, I addressed myself to the latter. "Very poor indeed. Only a brace and a half of birds, and a couple of hares. The Padre, though, has brought home a fox. Dinner ready?"

He. "Your dinner? Oh, yes, that was ready some hours ago. It awaits you at the Alcalde's—hope you'll enjoy it. It will merely require warming."

I. "Shall we not, then, have the pleasure of your company?"

He. "To tell you the truth, I have made up my mind to remain where I am. The villagers, as you

perceive, have maltreated me ; so the idea occurred to me, my best plan would be to fortify the house."

I. "In our absence, quite right. But now that the Padre has returned, as well as myself, no further precaution is requisite."

He. "Pardon me. I take quite a different view of the subject."

I (a little annoyed). "Explain yourself."

He. "In case you should receive satisfactory intelligence that my countrymen are approaching in force, and supposing you should in consequence deem it requisite to evacuate this hamlet and fall back on Vittoria, permit me to inquire, would you not feel it your duty to invite me to accompany you as a prisoner?"

I. "Probably."

He. "Of course you would. Now, that being your duty, I have been led to consider what, under the circumstances, is my duty. And it strikes me, I confess, that in the prospect of a speedy reunion with my countrymen, the most proper thing I can do is—to remain where I am."

I. "Permit me, however, to suggest, that if you persist in this view, and if we should be induced in consequence to adopt vigorous measures, you may find yourself, on their proving successful, very awkwardly situated among the people of this place. You know their feeling, and I might no longer be able to restrain them."

He. "Permit me, on the other hand, to suggest, that should I maintain myself in this house till my countrymen arrive, the exploit will cover me with glory, my comrades will rush to congratulate me, and I shall be appreciated throughout the French army. In short, M. le Capitaine, I consider my actual position impregnable; and never in my life did I feel more completely at my ease than I do at this moment. Benevolently anxious to prevent the needless effusion of blood, I tender you my disinterested advice to abstain from any rash attempt; and, by no means unwilling to impart useful information, I beg to state that, while your sick men in the hospital have next to no ammunition, I, on my part, have secured all the powder and shot in the village. The Padre's store, the Alcalde's, and—pardon me—your own, are all in my safe keeping."

Beginning to feel out of temper, I made an appeal. "I thought, Monsieur, in dealing with an officer and a gentleman, I should, at any rate, find security in his plighted word. Remember, you are on your parole."

"Ah!" he replied with much gravity, "you touch my honour. I cannot permit that. But, Monsieur, I think you scarcely recollect. My parole? Let me see. What was my parole? That I would not escape from this place. Very good. Here I am. If my own countrymen come and fetch me away, that, of course, is quite another affair."

I was sick of this long conversation, and a little sulky. "Monsieur," said I, "you seem to reckon on the arrival of your countrymen. Doubtless the movement on their part will bring some of mine. Should you hold out till they arrive, which, however, is far from certain, depend upon it you will not again obtain your parole; you will be treated as a common prisoner."

"Never mind," said he; "I must take the rough with the smooth. As far as my own military experience goes, the French are quite as quick in their movements as the English; and you yourself have taught me to believe" (he bows very low indeed) "that the conduct of British officers to a French officer who happens to find himself in their power, will never be other than that of a gentleman. By the by, I have a little request to make. Should you send for assistance to Vittoria, pray let it be such a force that I may capitulate without disgrace,—not less than a *corps d'armée*, I beg. As to artillery, a siege-train, if you please. I could not possibly surrender to field guns."

I felt excessively disgusted, and was about to withdraw. Yet, recollecting that, with all his gasconade, M. le Tisanier had certainly manifested a sort of good feeling, by preparing our dinner in the midst of his arrangements for defence, I paused.

"I am sorry our stock of game is so small to-day," said I. "Will you do me the favour to accept of it?"

"No," said he, with an air of decision; "I could not. Excuse me. A thousand thanks."

"Come, come," said I; "bent as you are on resistance, at least let us carry on this war without mutual animosity. Oblige me by accepting of the hares and partridges for your private use."

"It is out of the question," he answered firmly. "Honour forbids my compliance. Nevertheless," he added, after a pause, as if struck by some new idea, "to prove that I am not above receiving an obligation, I will accept—the fox."

Accept the fox? Though not exactly understanding this, I returned to where I had left the produce of the day's sport in the keeping of the Padre and Francisco. The Padre was gone; so, making free to lift the fox from Francisco's shoulders, I went back to the place of conference, and handed it up to M. le Tisanier, who reappeared at his window. He received the gift without explanation, but with a profusion of bows as well as many polite acknowledgments. Fortunate for him were his limber indications of gratitude; for, just as he made his first bow on receiving the slaughtered fox, the crack of a musket from an opposite hovel was accompanied by the whizz of a bullet, which passed just over his head, and, had he

remained upright, would have doubtless passed through it.

"Good," said he ; "another bullet added to our store of ammunition, and one charge less in the Padre's pouch. That was his musket."

"Now," said I, "be persuaded. Go in at once. The Padre will not make a second miss."

"It will take at least two minutes," he replied, "ere the Padre can fire again. Monsieur," he continued, with earnestness and emotion, "I have yet a request. Having resolved to assume my present attitude of defensive hostilities, not so much for my own sake, as to save my captive countrymen, to whom even your influence might not always prove an adequate protection in this execrable village, I think you can guess the parties who are now the chief objects of my solicitude. On the whole, I judged it their safest course that they should continue in the hospital rather than join me here. As Spaniards, should they find their present position untenable, they can at any rate escape. But, as you know my secret, may I still depend on your good offices? May I venture to hope that, in any case of exigency, you will render all the assistance in your power to one whose life I prize, as much as—as much as I disregard my own?" There spoke the Gascon.

"Depend upon me," I replied. "Now withdraw from the window without further parley."

He backed into the house with another bow, and reclosed the shutter. As he disappeared he smiled; nor could I altogether preserve my gravity.

Certainly the Padre's ideas touching the laws of war were a little primitive. In fact, his firing while the conference was in progress looked almost like violating a flag of truce.

"Well, Señor Padre," said I, on entering the cottage whence the shot had proceeded, "how do you intend to regain possession of your house?"

The Padre looked dumfounded. "I rather depended on your experience," he replied. "Were I in the house, I would undertake to hold it against fifty Frenchmen. But as we must now be the assailants, and as that is a line of warfare less in my way, I look chiefly to your own more extensive acquaintance with sap, mining, intrenchments, and approaches."

"No, no," I answered. "You have thought fit to commence operations, so you must go through with them."

"Señor Capitan," said the Padre, "I am already sufficiently punished by having missed that shot. Do not aggravate my penalty by——" Enter a messenger in haste.

It was Francisco, not only in haste, but in a high state of exasperation. His look I will not attempt to delineate. The face of a well-conducted, taciturn, sober-minded Spaniard, when distorted by passion,

must be seen, not described; and, if seen, will not soon be forgotten.

"The enemy," he cried, "defies us! He has hoisted his standard!"

We looked towards the house. An ensign of some sort he had raised, sure enough; of what kind we could not immediately distinguish, but the fact was palpable. From the flat roof there rose a slender pole, and at its summit hung suspended and swinging in the wind a something—what?—the fox's brush.

CHAPTER XVII.

Francisco spoke truly. It was defiance, and no mistake. To hang out a fox's tail! Not only defiance, but mockery—rank insult! I had suggested to M. le Tisanier, in our recent parley, the possible arrival of an English force. But this was a contingency to be now as much deprecated on my part as on his. To be caught by my countrymen laying siege to my own prisoner ensconced in my own billet, the housetop surmounted by a banner which whimsically spoke the language of challenge and derision combined,—why, on returning to headquarters, I should never hear the end of it. M. le Tisanier might think it a very good joke; but I very soon settled it in my own mind that either

by storm or by regular approach I must reduce him and his garrison in the least possible time. So nothing remained but to let slip the dogs of war—*i.e.*, to open the campaign.

From inquiries instituted on my suggestion by the Padre, it was at once ascertained that the village possessed next to nothing in the shape of ammunition and *matériel* for carrying on the siege. M. le Tisanier had indeed very correctly stated that the bulk was in his own safe keeping. Burning the house would not exactly have suited the Padre, even had it been built of combustible materials, or had I myself entertained any such truculent designs.

Without interruption on the part of the enemy, I reconnoitred the building on all sides. It stood in its strength, completely detached from all other tenements, without garden, trees, fences, or anything else affording cover for our approaches. Close by, indeed, there stood a small shed which served as a wood-house, solidly built of stone. But this also was entirely detached from the main building; and its door, opening sideways, was completely commanded from the roof and windows of the house itself.

Having posted some of the villagers to watch in the surrounding cottages, with directions to report if they noticed any movement in the house, but not to show themselves, the Padre and I, not in the best of humours, were about to withdraw to our

dinner at the Alcalde's. At that moment, with some surprise, I noticed Sergeant Pegden coming down the village from the hospital.

Sergeant Pegden was a Dover man. On my visit to the hospital the day before, I had left him, tardily convalescent, in bed. His conduct in the regiment had been always good, and had gained his actual rank as a non-commissioned officer. Like many other fine fellows, he had knocked up in the Vittoria campaign; and, after going into hospital, he had appeared to be labouring under a total prostration of physical powers, almost amounting to atrophy. He there was kept as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and had perfect rest. But even with all the benefit of M. le Tisanier's culinary skill, he had made but poor progress; in fact, his frame appeared too far exhausted to recruit, except very gradually indeed, by either rest or nourishment.

The Sergeant's step, as he now approached, was shaky, almost tottering. His countenance, emaciated while he remained in bed, now looked death-like. He had turned out neat and tidy after a fashion, though his clothing was worn and faded. He reached us, and we exchanged salutes.

"Why, Pegden," said I, "what brings you down here?"

"Please—sir," he feebly replied, "I hope you'll excuse me; but we heard what has happened, so I thought I had better come down. Would have

been here a good bit sooner, sir, only if I hadn't not had some stitching to do first."

"What other men," I asked, "are able to turn out?"

"Please, sir," replied he, "that's what they wished me to speak to you about. There's five of them as says they can come down whenever you please, sir, only if they had a few buttons, and some needles and thread."

"Which five are they?" said I.

"There's the Lancashire man, sir," he answered, "and there's Sandwich Sam, and Cockney, and the Parson, them four. And there's Teakettle Tom, he says he thinks he could come, only he hasn't not got no breeches."

"Very good," said I; "go into the house, and take some refreshment, while we see what the village can supply. To-morrow morning you can bring the men down."

The Padre having instituted an inquiry in the village to meet the requisition for military stores, we sat down to dinner. All the articles required were soon forthcoming; so, having allowed the Sergeant a little time for rest and refreshment, I directed Francisco to take the things, and to go back with the Sergeant to the convent.

Dinner concluded, we were leaving the house, when I was surprised to find Sergeant Pegden seated in the porch.

"Why, Sergeant," said I, "will you take anything more to eat or to drink? I fear you have overtaxed your strength."

"Nothing more, thank'e, sir," said the Sergeant. "Much obliged to you for all favours. Only please, sir, I'm waiting for that Sandwich Sam. I brought him down with me from the hospital; only when we got into the village he hung behind, because he said he wasn't regimental."

"Well," said I, "bring him down in the morning with the rest, as tidy as you can turn them out. When you get back to the hospital, you will probably find he is there before you. By the by, Pegden, I suppose you know all about those two Spaniards up there."

The Sergeant sniggered. "Yes, sir," said he; "we all knows pretty well about them." The smirk on the Sergeant's cadaverous visage reminded one of a death's-head illumined by a flash of lightning. In fact, it might be truly said that the Sergeant "grinned horribly a ghastly smile."

"Well, then," I added, "tell the men I depend on their good behaviour. There must be no annoyance, no interference of any kind."

I had by this time mentally arranged my plan of operations for the next day. So, after posting a relief of sentinels, I lay down in my clothes, occasionally going my rounds till daybreak, to keep the watchmen wide awake, and secure a good look-out.

What I chiefly apprehended was an attempt of the garrison to escape in the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Early in the morning, Sergeant Pegden brought down his party ; one short, however, of the number announced by him the evening before. The absent man was Sam, the same who had been already reported missing. In fact, I learnt from the Sergeant that Sam had been out all night, and had not returned to the convent at all. This was a serious reduction of our available force.

Sandwich Sam, *alias* "Shrimps," had, previous to his enlistment, enjoyed the benefit of a somewhat amphibious education. By profession a hoyman, but also smart as a smuggler, he had occasionally condescended to fill up a leisure hour with the lively amusement of shrimping. Though certainly not the steadiest man in the regiment, Sam, who was a very handy fellow, and an old campaigner, when sober knew his duty, and maintained, on the whole, the character of a smart soldier.

Under other circumstances, I should have given directions for looking him up. But the sick Sergeant, and his party of convalescents, had, in their zeal for his Majesty's service, come down without their breakfast. I therefore felt it my more imme-

diate duty, as the best preparation for the exploits of the day, to supply them with that needful meal. My brave army had turned out anything but stout in health and smart in equipment; but they all showed full of pluck, well under command, and ready for anything.

Having extemporised a breakfast for the men, the Padre and I sat down to our own. Touching the important operations of the day, we were proceeding with our arrangements when an interruption took place, in the shape of a little disturbance outside. Sergeant Pegden was speaking to some one in the street, and speaking loud, in a voice of authority and angry expostulation.

"Come now, you; be quiet. Fall in, and behave like a man."

A voice responded: "File up your rusty old keys! Lock up your chistisses! and go to dinner with the poor!"

"Better take care, Sam," growled Teakettle Tom, in a low voice. "The Captain's in there, a-having his breakfast."

"Oh, is he?" replied Sam: "then I'll give him a song:—

' My fairther, he's a preacher,
A wherry honest man;
My mother, she's a washy-wom';
And I'm a true Brit-tan,

With my whack fol lol,' " &c,

I send Francisco to call in Sergeant Pegden.
Enter the Sergeant.

"Why, Pegden," said I, "what's all this about?"

"Very sorry, sir," replied the Sergeant; "but I'm afraid Sandwich Sam is a little overtaken."

"How can that be?" I asked. "Where could he get it?"

"Please, sir, I don't know," said the Sergeant. "But he seems to have got too much of it, and he has some with him now."

"Bring him in," said I.

Glorious, but a little stupid, Sam was brought in. His hand grasped the neck of a half-emptied bottle. Under his arm was another bottle, corked and full.

"I see what's the matter," said the Padre. "The man has found his way into the store-closet, and got at the wine which was brought here yesterday. Francisco, how could you be so negligent? Step into the back-room, and see whether he has left us any."

Francisco went as directed, and promptly returned. "Not a bottle is missing," said he.

"Señor Capitan," said the Padre, "this is an enigma. With the exception of my stock, there is no bottled wine in the village."

"To make sure, suppose we try it," said I.

"No need of that," answered the Padre. "The villagers keep their wine in skins. The Alcalde keeps his in a barrel. Within a circuit of three or

four leagues, my cellar, since our convent here was plundered, is the only depôt of bottled wine. My reason for keeping a stock you will readily understand. My poor self-denying fraternity, when they *do* drink wine, prefer it from the bottle, not from the wood."

"Why, then, according to that," said I, "this drunken fellow must, since last night, have found his way into the cellar of the house which we are presently to attack and carry by storm."

"I can only repeat what I have said already," replied the Padre. "It is an enigma."

"Where have you been, Sam?" I asked. "What have you been about?"

"About?" hiccupped Sam. "What have you been about? I am the lad as can (*hiccup*) show the British (*hiccup*) army how to walk into (*hiccup*) the hinnimy's persition, and (*hiccup*)—Oh, my dear Sergeant Pegden, I vos so wherry dry (*hiccup*)—knocked off the heads of half-a-dozen (*hiccup*)—and didn't not drink ownny hate on 'em (*hiccup*). Hooray! Death or glo—— (*hiccup, hiccup*)."
Here Sam became so much worse, that I felt it advisable to order his immediate removal from the apartment.

It was no bad way of assailing the hostile fortress, if we could effect a lodgment in its lowest storeys. Assuming that Sam had been there before us, the first question was how he entered; but this he was too far gone to tell us.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was imperative, however, to determine the question without loss of time, and to determine it without revealing the fact to the garrison, to whom, it was to be presumed, their weak point remained as yet a secret. Under these circumstances, having first directed Francisco to ascertain as far as possible, in the village, what Sam had been about the night before, I promptly commenced a general reconnaissance of the enemy's position. The affair, which had hitherto been stupid enough, now became a little exciting. I made the circuit of the beleaguered house without interruption from the foe, but also without discovering an entrance.

My attention, however, was at length attracted by the wood-house, which stood by the side of the premises, contiguous, but wholly detached from them. At that end of the shed which was farthest removed from the main building, I noticed, close to the gable-wall, what appeared to be a small heap of rubbish. To this, without betraying my object, I could not make a direct approach; yet it seemed to invite further investigation.

It soon became apparent, on more particularly noting the character of the locality, that, by availing himself of the shelter afforded by one or two neighbouring cottages, a person might approach obliquely, without being noticed from the dwelling

itself, right up to the end wall of the wood-house, where the rubbish was lying on the ground. Immediately availing myself of this important discovery, I made my approaches accordingly, and reached the spot.

The heap of rubbish was at once accounted for. A hole had been broken in the wall. The opening was sufficiently large, so I took the liberty of entering, and now found myself in the wood-house, which was decidedly an outwork of the enemy's position.

Sam had been there before me, and had left his marks in the shape of empty bottles. But, what was still more important to the progress of the siege, I noticed, at the other end of the shed, which was furthest from the perforated wall, and nearest to the house, an excavation in the earthen floor. I looked down, but could not discover its depth. Nothing could be discovered, save darkness visible.

Here then was the shaft by which Sam had walked into the Padre's best bin; and here too, in all probability, was a ready-made entrance into the enemy's stronghold. Determining to muster my forces and head an assault without further loss of time, I quitted the outhouse, as I had entered it, without being observed, and returned to the Alcalde's. The Padre, at my request, followed me into a private room.

"Señor Padre," said I, "oblige me by describing in general terms the topography of your cellar."

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"Ah, *hijo mio*," said the Padre with deep emotion, "I trust you have no idea of carrying on the war in that quarter. Believe me, except the Lamego hams, the cellar contains nothing but wine."

"Tell me," I asked, "does your cellar extend underground in a lateral direction? Has it any subterranean recesses?"

"Nothing, believe me," replied the Padre in a panic, "with the sole exception of the wine and the hams, and a few trifling articles in silver which I succeeded in rescuing from our plundered convent."

"If you wish," I replied, "to be reinstated forthwith in the possession of your cellar, and of your house besides, only have the goodness to explain to me——"

"Oh, spare the cellar!" cried the Padre, frightened out of his wits, "even if a dozen houses—all the houses in the village—are assaulted, sacked, gutted, levelled with the ground, blown up sky-high!"

"What's the use of talking in that way?" I replied. "Come, Señor Padre, just give me the information I want, and it shall go hard with us but you and I will dine in the house this afternoon. We must take it off-hand, and I already discern the road to victory. Only tell me, does the cellar extend, underground, outside the walls of the house? In particular, does it extend in the direction of the adjoining shed?"

The Padre subsided into a brown study. "Why, now you ask the question," said he, "I think it does. The house is old, built after the fashion of the Moors. There certainly is an underground recess or passage, of some length, going off from the cellar; and, on consideration, I think it must run in the direction of the wood-house—nay, perhaps extend under it. Probably it served originally as a subterranean communication between the outhouse and the house itself."

The "enigma" was now wellnigh solved. I summoned Francisco, and inquired whether he had succeeded in obtaining from the villagers any intelligence of Sam's proceedings. All that could be learnt amounted to this, which, however, was quite decisive: that Sam, the night before, when he stole away from Sergeant Pegden, went begging from cottage to cottage, till he had procured the loan of an implement called a "pico," which, though not identical with an English pickaxe, in some measure resembles it, and is available for the same purposes. Sam, having made this acquisition, was seen no more, till he reappeared in the village next morning, "mucho embriagado" (very drunk).

I also recollected that when, on our first occupation of the village, some little plundering took place, Sam, though he had pleaded exemption from duty as an invalid, and had been brought along on a bullock-car, then also contrived to become con-

siderably elevated ; and I now felt convinced that he had made his first acquaintance with the Padre's cellar on that occasion. The rest was easily explained. An old smuggler, accustomed, in the locality of his former exploits, Kingsdown, Walmer, Richborough, &c., to underground deposits of goods, he had, in his previous visit to the Padre's bins, at once made himself acquainted with the peculiarities of the position ; and now, on his return to the village with the Sergeant, he had promptly embraced this first opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with such an agreeable locality. Hence the requisition for the pickaxe, the hole in the wall, the excavation in the floor. Sam, it was clear, had tapped the Padre's cellar before he tapped his wine.

Taking a circuitous route in order that the enemy might not discover our movements, I brought round the Sergeant and three of the men to the perforated wall. We then passed through the opening, one by one, and got into the wood-house unseen by the garrison. Hurrah ! we have effected a lodgment in the enemy's counterscarp — only don't make a noise.

CHAPTER XX.

The shaft by which Sandwich Sam had dropt into the Padre's cellar could not be very deep, but we saw no bottom. It struck me that some-

thing might be gained by excluding the daylight, which principally entered by the newly-made hole in the gable-end of the shed. Against this hole, therefore, I placed the three soldiers, to keep out as much light as possible; and now the Sergeant and I, on looking down into the shaft, were able to discern a glimmer which, feeble as it was, sufficed to show us that, assisted by others, a person might descend with no great difficulty. I, therefore, descended first; the Sergeant followed; then came the men.

We found ourselves in an arched tunnel constructed of stone, and leading from under the out-house, with which in former days it had doubtless communicated, right into the cellar, which we entered—cautiously, you may suppose, but without difficulty. Now, *M. le Tisanier*! Once in the cellar, we no longer had need to grope our way. There was no window, but light came in from various crannies. I listened. There were footsteps above. So! we were under the kitchen. How effect an entrance?

Close to the wall of the cellar, and immediately to the left of the opening by which we had entered from the recess, stood a dilapidated flight of steps, say an old ladder. Doubtless there was a trap-door at its summit. I mounted, and gently pressed against the ceiling above. It gave signs of yielding. The way into the fortress, then, lay open before us. Turning to Sergeant Pegden, I desired him in a

whisper to remain with the three soldiers where he was, but to hold them in readiness to come forth on my first summons.

Then, using a little more force, I gradually raised the trap-door, which was kind enough not to creak, and emerged into the kitchen. There stood M. le Tisanier, *solus*. Profoundly intent on some culinary operation, which with his accustomed sedulity he was conducting at the stove, he awhile remained utterly unconscious of my presence. I let down the trap-door into its frame, and so concealed the manner of my entrance.

From scanty materials he was preparing dinner for the garrison. On a dresser I noticed—1, A very moderate supply of bread for a party of five; 2, Some lard; 3, Certain wild herbs, roots, and champignons, such as he had been accustomed to cull in his rambles; 4, The bones remaining from former meals, specially those of a hare, a goose, and a hind quarter of mutton; 5, The giblets of the said goose, set apart with the head and pluck of the said hare, as if designed for some signal triumph of a scanty cuisine. I coughed. He turned.

Startled at first, he recovered in an instant his usual self-possession and urbanity.

"Ah," said he, "good morning, M. le Capitaine. I am not at present exactly aware how you found your way in, but I am not the less happy to see you. In entering without noise you have acted

wisely. Considering the state of things outside, you could not have adopted a more discreet or a safer mode of presenting yourself before me, with the view of surrendering yourself a prisoner. Good. You will do me the honour of dining with me. Thus will you escape the inconvenience of losing, even for a single day, the benefit of my matchless skill as a culinary amateur."

"I see you are preparing dinner," said I, "without having availed yourself of the Padre's stores."

"Bah!" he exclaimed; "cooking, in its higher operations, is independent of materials. When there is nothing for dinner, then it is that the true artist develops his professional resources. To tell you the truth, Monsieur, the Padre's chief store is his cellar, into which he never permitted me to enter. I therefore, with that delicacy which always distinguishes men of elevated sentiments like myself, felt it right, now that I am in military possession, to abstain from purveying in that direction."

This was all the better for the Padre's Lamego hams, and also for the enterprise by which we had effected a lodgment. For, had M. le Tisanier once made acquaintance with the cellar, he was not the man to have left that way of approach unguarded.

"How is it," I asked, "that your garrison keeps so bad a look-out? Here am I, come to beat up your quarters, without having received a single challenge."

"Pooh, pooh," he replied; "no doubt they let

you in on purpose. As you have presented yourself here without showing a flag of truce, of course I must regard you as my prisoner."

"Excuse me," said I, "if I take the opposite view. Monsieur, you are my prisoner. Probably you are not aware that my forces have effected a lodgment, and at this moment occupy your position."

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed seriously, setting down a saucepan.

"Monsieur," I replied, "I give you my word that the soldiers under my command now occupy these premises in force. And by the same entrance through which they came in, I could, if I pleased, bring in not only my reserve, but all the Spaniards in the village. You know what would be the consequences. Yesterday you expressed a benevolent wish to prevent the needless effusion of blood. Now, therefore, give me credit for being actuated on my part by a similar motive of humanity, in politely soliciting your instant surrender. In case of further resistance on your part, although I can control my own men, I could not answer for the Padre and his people, who are very much exasperated. Therefore determine what you will do; but remember, your own life, and the lives of your unfortunate and gallant countrymen, depend on your decision."

He. "Have the kindness to put it on their lives only, not on mine. Then I can treat without com-

promising my sense of honour. By further resistance, you say, their lives would be imperilled. In case of my condescending to accept terms of capitulation, would their lives be safe?"

I. "That I have already arranged with the Padre. He promises, in case of your coming to terms without delay, to be answerable for the personal security of your whole party till you are safe in the hands of the English at Vittoria. He also promises that he will remain in the village as a check on his own countrymen till the transfer takes place."

He. "It appears then that, by accepting terms, I may now secure that safety for my comrades which I sought by resistance. Very well, M. le Capitaine. In occupying and holding this position, I discharged a duty. In surrendering it, I discharge another."

I. "Very good. Then all is settled."

"Excuse me," said M. le Tisanier, assuming an air of considerable gravity. "There is one little matter which we have not settled yet."

CHAPTER XXI.

"It will gratify me to meet your wishes," said I, "in any further arrangement which you may propose."

He. "M. le Capitaine, you particularly oblige me by saying so; for the business to which I now refer

is one which personally affects you and me. In the conference which I had the pleasure of holding with you yesterday afternoon, you alluded to my parole in terms which affected my honour. As I said then, so I say now : I cannot permit that."

I. "Nothing could be further from my intention. Surely, in merely reminding you of your parole, not saying you had broken it, and in viewing it according to my own interpretation rather than yours, I did nothing at which you can reasonably feel hurt."

He. "Ha ! you explain, but you do not apologise. M. le Capitaine, though punctilious—nay, more than punctilious, chivalrous—I am not implacable. One word of apology would——"

I. "Apology ? What do you mean by apology ? I tell you I intended no offence ; and I have nothing to retract. If I unintentionally wounded your feelings, of course I regret it ; but apology is out of the question."

He. "Precisely. That is just what I expected you to say. Then, M. le Capitaine, there remains but one alternative. We had better decide this little affair at once. (*Brings from a corner of the kitchen two swords.*) You really must oblige me." (*Crosses the swords in his right hand, bows, and presents the hilts.*)

I. "If you insist upon it, of course I must. I never heard of anything so absurd in my life !"

He. "Hold ! Let me fasten the kitchen-door. That will prevent interruption on the part of my

countrymen, and also of yours." (*He fastens the door.*)

I. "The door may serve to exclude your men, but it will not keep out mine. No matter. They have already received orders to keep where they are, till summoned by me." We crossed our swords.

He. "Hold! Excuse me one moment, just while I take off that boiler."

Again our swords crossed.

He. "Monsieur, the attack is with you." (*Stamps.*) "*Commencez donc.*" (*Stamps twice.*) "Not bad, that lunge. Hold! your left shoulder is a little too forward. Withdraw it *un petit peu*, if you please. Capital, that thrust in quarte! You lunge better in quarte than in tierce. I hope you enjoyed your dinner yesterday? Ah, you threw away that *coup*. By keeping your point a trifle lower, you might have had me just under the arm. I suppose the Padre was not in the best of humours? You fence a little too wide. Better! Capital! Capital!"

Though acknowledged the best fencer in my regiment, I could make no impression on M. le Tisanier. I therefore bowed, and stood on my guard.

"Ah," said he, "now the attack is with me."

The attack of M. le Tisanier was not only brilliant and energetic, but in every respect formidable. With the arm of a Hercules, the eye of a lynx, and the skip of a chimpanzee, he advanced, he retreated, he sidled right and left, he got round me, till we had more than once perambulated the whole circuit

of the kitchen, and till I, in meeting him front to front, had repeatedly faced the opposite points of the compass. Any one practised in fence will understand, when I say that, even while I succeeded in parrying every thrust, his attack was evidently *gaining* upon me ; that is, his movements in assault had become a little in advance of mine in guard ; and this advantage (most important, though in point of time scarcely appreciable) he gradually went on improving as the attack proceeded. In fact, nothing could be cleaner than his style of operating. Even his wrist, though always in position, moved in a larger area than his point, which played about my sword in a small semicircle like summer lightning.

At length, seeing an opportunity for which I had long watched, I raised my blade by the same movement with which I parried a thrust in quarte, and, ere he could recover himself, dropped it again so as just to touch his hand. My object was to inflict a slight wound, and disarm him. I was so far successful, that my point reached him, but with no visible consequences. I had made the first hit, but without putting my opponent *hors de combat*.

He sprang backwards with an angry growl, and for a few moments seemed to be collecting his forces. Foreseeing the impetuosity of his renewed assault, I prepared to give him a suitable reception ; but, at the instant when about to commence a repetition of his favours, he moved a little to the right. This movement compelled on my part a correspond-

ing change of position, to effect which I slightly shifted my left foot. My foot struck against something on the floor. I stumbled. Though just on the point of springing forward, M. le Tisanier, who through this mishap had me completely at his mercy, with a most winning bow immediately dropped his point.

The cause of my tripping is easily explained. Sergeant Pegden, either from having discovered, down in the cellar, that war had commenced over his head, or from some other motive, was beginning to raise the trap-door. I tripped against the edge. Stamping it down with my left heel, as a sign for the sergeant to keep quiet, but not so as to attract the notice of M. le Tisanier, who remained unconscious that my forces were in such immediate proximity, I again put myself on guard, saying, "My best acknowledgments are due for your forbearance. Whenever you wish to proceed, I am ready."

"A thousand thanks," said M. le Tisanier, with a renewal of supple and profound inflections. "I am satisfied."

"Very well," said I, extending my hand. "All things besides, then, can be easily arranged."

We tackled after the English fashion, and shook hands—an operation the more sedulously sought on my part, from visible symptoms of preparation, on the part of M. le Tisanier, for what in those days so frequently terminated French duels—a hug.

The shake accomplished, I noticed something on my hand. It was blood.

"Is this yours, or mine?" I asked.

"Did I not tell you that I was satisfied?" said he. "My honour is satisfied. Whether I am whipped through the body, or scratched on the knuckle, what does it signify?"

CHAPTER XXII., AND LAST.

From the inferior regions now rose the voice of Sergeant Pegden. "Please, sir, I beg your pardon; but it's immediate."

"What's immediate?" I asked.

"Please, sir," he replied, "it's an orderly come from Vittoria; and brought a letter for you, sir, directed 'immediate' on the back of it, sir."

"Will you permit me?" I asked M. le Tisanier, raising the trap-door.

"Why, this is perfectly incredible," said he. "Above, and all around, I was prepared. It never entered my thoughts that I could be assailed from the shades below."

When I had raised the trap-door, there appeared—not Sergeant Pegden, but—the head of his halbert, and three glistening bayonets, fixed to the muzzles of three firelocks.

"Ground arms!" I cried. "Sergeant Pegden, show yourself."

The muskets promptly subsided into the darkness from which they had emerged, and, with a letter in his hand, the Sergeant slowly rose.

While, partly amused, partly surprised, M. le Tisanier gazed on the wasted form and pallid visage of the Sergeant, who ascended like a spectre from the grave, I took the letter and opened it.

It was an order to adopt immediate measures for the removal of my invalids to the convalescent station at Vittoria, and then to rejoin forthwith my regiment on the frontiers of France, taking with me, to be exchanged for Sir Charles Popham of the——light infantry, my prisoner, Le Vicomte d'Y, lieutenant of the——Voltigeurs.

I. "M. le Vicomte, I am your most obedient, humble servant."

He. "M. le Capitaine, accept the assurances of my high consideration."

I. "M. le Vicomte, I have intelligence which no doubt will gratify you. It will be my pleasing duty to attend you to the frontiers, there to be exchanged."

He (with nonchalance). "For an Englishman? or for a Spaniard?"

I. "Happily, you are considered my prisoner, not a prisoner of the Spaniards. You will be exchanged for an English officer of the same military rank."

He. "Very good" (with much dignity). "That

is quite satisfactory to my sense of honour. Were it for a Spaniard, I hardly know whether I could condescend to accept of the exchange. By the by, since it is as your prisoner that I am to proceed to the frontiers, I think it best, for reasons which you will doubtless appreciate, that so long as we are together I should fully maintain that character. *M. le Capitaine*, I offer you my sword."

I. "M. le Vicomte, you have taught me that you can use your sword not only with courage and address, but with magnanimity. Wear it."

The arrangements for our departure were soon completed. My sick men were conveyed to Vittoria. With them went Sergeant Pegden in charge, and the four French soldiers as prisoners to the English. Then, taking an affectionate leave of the Padre, we joined a party of British dragoons, who had been out on a reconnaissance towards Pampeluna, and with them pursued our route towards the frontiers.

The first day's march took us across undulating ground, the road alternately dipping into valleys, and topping the intermediate elevations. As the Vicomte and I jogged on side by side, I noticed that, on our reaching the summit of each successive eminence, he cast a furtive but anxious look backwards, as if watching for some party in the rear. I also looked back, and perceived that we were followed by a couple of mules, which bore on their backs two wounded Spaniards.

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

THE PUNDRAPORE RESIDENCY.

BY ALEXANDER ALLARDYCE.

[*MAGA.* AUGUST 1872.]

I.

FEW events have caused so great a sensation among Indian officials as did the appearance of a 'Gazette' announcing the appointment of Captain Jones of the 27th Bengal Cavalry—the Jungly-wallahs—to the political agency of the Pundrapore State. The causes of an Afghan war had been more easily accounted for than the selection of a man who could not command an ounce of interest from head to tail of the service. The post was one of the most coveted appointments in India. Sir Rothie Murkus had, with tears in his eyes, refused the entreaties of a host of Gushingtons, Rattles, and Pendlows, whose genealogical trees might have convinced the most sceptical of their special fitness

for the Pundrapore Residency. The same venerable statesman affirmed to his disappointed relatives that the wires were pulled by a hand which he could not venture to oppose. What was this mystery of the hidden hand? All Calcutta talked of nothing else; and from Cossipore to Garden Reach the wonderful appointment of Captain Jones to the Pundrapore Residency was in everybody's mouth.

No one had more reason to be surprised than the officer who was thus unexpectedly brought before the public. When Captain Jones was solemnly interrogated by his colonel in the presence of the brigadier and other field-officers of the station, he declared, upon his honour as an officer and a gentleman, that he had not a single relative either in the Court of Directors or in the Board of Control—that he had never seen the Governor-General—and that he hardly knew the names of the members of Council or secretaries to Government. And upon cross-examination he was compelled to acknowledge that the only connection between his family and India arose from his uncle having kept a grocer's shop in the East India Docks, where the old man had amassed enough of money to purchase Company's paper, and to procure a cavalry cadetship for his nephew. Had the occasion been one of less importance, Jones would have scrupled to be so frank with his brother officers. He had hitherto been somewhat reticent upon the subject of his family, with the ex-

ception of a few obscure hints that its origin was Welsh and princely. But Captain Jones felt that romancing would be dangerous at such a juncture ; and the brigadier went away more puzzled than before.

Had Jones seen his name in the 'Gazette' as a Knight Commander of the Bath, it would not have occasioned him more surprise than did the notification of his appointment to the Pundrapore Residency. To purchase out his seniors step by step, and to retire from the service in process of time with the title of Colonel, had been the very moderate limit of Jones's ambition. His leisure moments were frequently devoted to the composition of epitaphs, in which he described himself as having been "for x years The Gallant and Resolute Leader of the 27th Bengal Cavalry — the Junglywallahs," "The Brave and Accomplished Commandant," "Who lived like a Soldier and died like a Christian," with many other similar expressions of self-appreciation. Treasured up in one corner of his desk lay a design for a mural tablet, with an inscription as long as a modern biography. This, as Jones had told Cornet Sniggers in confidence, was a memorial that his sorrowing relatives would probably erect in Cheltenham Church, near which town he meant to set up his staff when his campaigning days were over. Sniggers also informed the mess that Jones had shown him the plan of a cenotaph

overshadowed by two palm-trees, erected, as the legend said, "By his grateful and devoted soldiers, Who revered him as a Father, And worshipped him as a Leader." In the design for this remarkable piece of sculpture, two native troopers, in the flowing turbans and tight-fitting jackets of the Junglywallahs, were represented as bending over their wounded or dying commander, whose arm was strained in the effort to wave above his head his broken sword. Round the base were skulls, cross-bones, and other mortuary emblems, understood to be the remains of Sikhs and Afghans who had fallen beneath the sabre of the recumbent warrior. The tears had stood in Jones's eyes as he showed these tributes of affection to his subaltern, who gave, in turn, many assurances of sympathy and promises of secrecy. These promises did not, however, prevent Sniggers from acquainting the mess with the little weakness of their brother officer; and for many a day after, Jones had to submit to being dubbed "Old Mortality" at the mess-table of the Junglywallahs.

Probably the whole Bengal army did not contain a more ungainly figure than that of the new Resident. He stood six feet high, with a thin chest and round shoulders. The knees of his long spindle-legs were constantly coming into collision, and the natural pallor of his lean sallow face was set off by a stiff black mustache, gaunt cheeks, and a chin generally half-shaven. All the riding-masters

in her Majesty's service could not have given him a decent seat in the saddle within the compass of an ordinary lifetime; nor could the smartest drill-sergeant in India have induced him to keep the step for five successive minutes when walking in company. It was a joke in the regiment that Jones turned away his head when fencing, and shut his eyes when shooting. His unprepossessing appearance might have passed unnoticed but for the *gaucherie* of his manner, which in the society of ladies was especially painful. At balls, where Jones underwent self-torments to make himself agreeable, it was remarked that everybody whom he asked to dance was engaged, and that even the permanent wall-flowers found pretexts for declining his attentions. It was at Bustlepore, where the Commander-in-Chief was holding a levee about the beginning of the first Sikh war, that Jones, in making his bow, jerked his head so close to his Excellency's stomach, that Sir George started back and demanded with an oath "who the clumsy ogre was?" Jones passed along with his white face yet a shade whiter, and something like tears in his grey eyes, but no one ever heard him complain of the Chief's rudeness; and old Colonel Gargoyle of the Junglywallahs, whose word was law upon all matters of etiquette, declared that Jones was more of a gentleman than Sir George Blitzen.

The Pundrapore Residency was one of the best

pieces of patronage in the hands of the Bengal Government. Successive Governor-Generals had filled the appointment with their favourite aides-de-camp and private secretaries; and when there was nobody in particular to be provided for, a distinguished officer from either branch of the public service had generally been selected. The last Resident, the Hon. Captain Grantley, was the near relative of a former Governor-General, and he consequently enjoyed a full measure of the present ruler's hatred. And his lordship was at no loss for opportunities of evincing his feelings towards Captain Grantley. The Pundrapore territories were at that time in what the Calcutta newspapers call "a state of chronic anarchy." Mozuffer Jung, the last ruler, a politic Mussulman, who had kept friends with all parties, had been dead for about two years. His youngest and favourite wife, a Persian beauty who had cost five thousand rupees at Herat, had managed to secure the regency of the State, the custody of her infant son, and the control over the other three wives and miscellaneous female appurtenances of the harem. The British Government, knowing the favourite Begum's capacity for intrigue and mischief-making, strongly opposed this arrangement; and the late Nawab had been incessantly urged to commit the administration of the State to his Prime Minister, a Mahratta Brahmin, upon whose fidelity and steadfastness the Government

could with confidence rely. But it soon became apparent that Captain Grantley would do little to promote the policy of Government. The fair Persian made the best of the opportunities which her secluded life afforded, to captivate the Resident soon after his arrival at Pundrapore; and Captain Grantley was a man of too much gallantry and too little prudence to decline the flirtation. The result was that he allowed himself to become the instrument of carrying out the Begum's projects, and of thwarting the instructions which Sir Rothie Murkus, the Foreign Secretary, kept continually dinning into his ears. After the Nawab's death, the Begum became less guarded in her intrigues, and Captain Grantley still more infatuated. The Calcutta papers clamoured for his withdrawal, and "Brutus," and "Indignation," and "True Briton," and "Anglo-Indian," and all the other *noms de plume* of newspaper letter-writers, were constantly at work expressing the public disgust at Captain Grantley's proceedings. But Captain Grantley's noble relative was now all powerful in the Board of Control; and so the Captain snapped his fingers at the Calcutta press, for he knew that the Governor-General would not dare to adopt its extreme suggestions.

There was then an uneasy feeling among the British in Hindostan. The Sikhs had not yet been finally crushed, and their chieftains were swagger-

ing about through the Punjab, talking of the speedy approach of the time when Runjeet would drive the British into the sea. Dost Mahomed, too, was looking down from Cabul with a troubled countenance at the progress of the red-coated Kaffirs. And, what was still more serious, there was much discontent among the powerful Rajpoot chieftains, who fretted impatiently at the checks imposed by the British upon the arbitrary exercise of their feudal power. In all intrigues of the day the Begum of Pundrapore took a prominent part. Her agents were in every petty court, fomenting all causes of discontent, and encouraging the Rajahs to unite together for the assertion of their independence. Symptoms of open disaffection had been more than once manifested in Pundrapore, until the Government thought it necessary to impress upon the chiefs the uselessness of insubordination by a display of troops. Sir George Blitzen, with a brilliant staff, escorted by a cavalry regiment, and by large detachments of infantry and artillery, entered Pundrapore with the ostensible object of paying his respects to the Begum. Sir George was a courtier of the Carlton House and Pavilion school, and his first impulse was to pacify the State by subduing the heart of its ruler. But the Begum would listen to none of his fine speeches. She was at no loss to divine what had procured her the honour of his Excellency's visit, and she determined to express

her dislike for the Government by slighting its representative. A grand durbar was held in the palace for his Excellency's reception, and Sir George took his seat upon the right hand of the Begum with so many high-flown compliments and expressions of regard, that Captain Gulstan, his Persian Secretary, could hardly find words to convey to the Begum the due warmth of the Chief's affection. Her Highness in turn complimented Sir George, and expressed her sorrow that his Excellency should be compelled to serve so far from his native country at his advanced age. How sad it was that the young Maharanee of Frangistan should have no younger warriors to command her forces, that she must send the father of grandfathers to lead her soldiers in India. The well-padded breast of Sir George quivered with scarce concealed anger at the taunt, as Gulstan tremblingly translated it, toning down the sneer as much as he dared. It was Sir George's weakness to look twenty years younger than his age; and barber, dentist, and tailor had done their utmost to support the delusion. This was but the beginning of hostilities; and affront after affront, but always within the bounds of diplomatic courtesy, was offered to his Excellency during his stay in Pundrapore, until he began to pray devoutly that the State would really revolt, that he might obtain some satisfaction for the slights he was receiving. If anything

could have added to the bitterness of these affronts, it would have been the studied deference with which the Begum treated Captain Grantley's counsels. Sir George did his best to pay back the Begum by bullying her favourite; but Captain Grantley, in his diplomatic capacity, was almost wholly independent of the military authorities, and he did not give himself much trouble about what his Excellency said or did. Sir George at length marched out of Pundrapore in a fury, and reported to the Government that the only salvation for the State was the deposition of the Begum, and the immediate recall and degradation of the Resident. The former could only be done with the authority of the Board of Control, and there was little hope that its members would assume so grave a responsibility to gratify Sir George, who was no favourite in Cannon Row. On the other hand, Captain Grantley's noble protector was the referee of the Board upon all political questions, and the Governor-General was too prudent a statesman to draw down upon himself the ire of his predecessor by the recall of the Resident. Fortunately for his Excellency, the residency of Kaifiabad just then fell vacant, and to this post Captain Grantley was at once promoted down-stairs. His salary was not diminished, and as his duties were confined to the payment of an annual pension, and the forwarding of a weekly budget of complaints on the part

of the recipient to the Foreign Office, he had little ground for grumbling; and it was at this juncture that Captain Jones took charge of the Pundrapore Residency.

II.

The Junglywallahs gave a dinner to their departing comrade, and said so many kind things about him that Jones really began to believe in himself, and to think that the Governor-General had shown great discrimination in filling up the Pundrapore agency.

"I should not wonder, my boy," said old Gargoyle, after many bumpers of "Simpkin" had been quaffed to the success of the new diplomatist, "but that, after all, you owe your success to the Begum herself. Her ladyship may have seen and fancied you when we marched through Pundrapore last relief-time, and have hocused the G.-G. into sending you to console her for the loss of that puppy Grantley."

Jones blushed, and the mess set up a roar of laughter, as they were in duty bound to do, at this witticism of the colonel's, while M'Gonigil, the senior captain and chief Adonis of the regiment, who would himself have gladly accepted the responsibilities of the Pundrapore Residency, not excluding the Begum, threw a contemptuous

glance across the table, and muttered, "The devil resave her oisight if she did."

Captain Jones arrived in Calcutta, and put up at Spence's, where he soon found that the Resident of Pundrapore was a very different personage from the young cadet who had lived there upon a hundred rupees a-month twelve years before. *Khidmutghars* flew to anticipate his orders, *punkah-wallahs* pulled as if for life or death whenever he came into their vicinity, and even the manager of the hotel—great man as he was—bowed with an appearance of politeness when Captain Jones appeared in the breakfast-room of a morning. At the club in Chowringhee, every one who had the slightest acquaintance with him asked him to dinner, and people whose names were scarcely known to him offered him their carriages for a drive on the Course. So much for being a political officer on fifteen hundred a-month, thought Jones, as he blessed the hour when he had been gazetted to the Political Department. There was still one ordeal to be gone through: he must report himself at the Foreign Office, and receive his instructions; and he much feared the result, if Sir Rothie Murkus were to subject him to a cross-examination upon the duties of a Political Agent. He had read all the article "Pundrapore" in 'Thornton's Gazetteer,' and had attempted to commit to memory the six treaties which the British Government had made with the

rulers of that State, none of which had ever been worth the parchment that bore the originals. And when he had mastered the Foreign Secretary's "Thoughts on the Duty of British Intervention in Native States," and the Under-Secretary's "Notes on Annexation," and the Assistant Secretary's "Quousque Tandem: A Plea for the Deposition of Indian Despots," he thought he might venture into the lion's den, and he accordingly sought the sanctum of Sir Rothie Murkus.

As he passed through the Assistant Secretary's room, that gentleman, who was engaged with the editor of the 'Bengal Peon,' abruptly broke off the conversation, and stared at Captain Jones as if his eyeballs would start from their sockets. In the next apartment, where the Under-Secretary, a small young gentleman of weak eyesight and bilious temperament, was similarly occupied with the editor of the 'John Bull,' he was honoured with an equal share of attention. Mr Waspbite wiped his spectacles, put them on, and said, "God bless me! are you Captain Jones, the Pundrapore man?" and having received an affirmative bow, he again said, "God bless me!" and appeared quite struck by the circumstance. At the next door stood Sir Rothie himself, shaking hands with the editor of the 'Padrepore Monitor and Weekly Evangelist,' for the Foreign Office knew well the value of cultivating the Exeter Hall interest. Though

Sir Rothie had more politeness than his subordinates, he too seemed to share in the general curiosity, and he subjected Captain Jones to a critical examination as he conducted him into his office.

"And so you're the new Resident of Pundrapore, are you, hey?" said Sir Rothie, as he seated himself at his desk; "I suppose you did not expect such promotion, eh?"

"I did not, sir; but I assure you I am very grateful for it," said Jones, modestly; "and I hope I shall prove to Government that its confidence has not been misplaced. May I ask to whom I am indebted for my good fortune?"

"Oh, to nobody in particular. The Government of Bengal always knows where to lay its finger upon the right man. And now for your instructions—here they are. And Captain Jones, if I were you, I would follow Mr Harcourt's advice as much as possible. He has been long in the Residency, and knows its ways. I shan't detain you longer; but stay, I think the Commander-in-Chief had something to say to you. You know he has just returned from Pundrapore? Well, I'm going now to Government House, where we shall meet Sir George. You may as well come along with me.

Jones trembled as the recollection of the fatal day at Bustlepore, when his awkwardness had imperilled the portly paunch of the Commander-in-

Chief, flashed across his mind ; but duty compels the soldier up to the cannon's mouth, and Jones resigned himself with a sigh to the prospect of meeting Sir George Blitzen.

He was, however, spared the pain of an interview. The Commander-in-Chief had already entered his carriage, and was driving off as Sir Rothie and Captain Jones came into the compound. "Hi, Sir George, Sir George ! this is Captain Jones, the new Resident of Pundrapore, whom you wished to see !" cried the Foreign Secretary, holding up his umbrella ; but the Chief's impatient horses would not be stayed. Sir George put his head out of the carriage and threw a penetrating glance in the direction of our hero. "All right," he cried ; "I am off to Barrackpore to inspect the station. Ugly as ever, Springer," he muttered to his aide-de-camp ; "he is just the man I wanted ;" and his Excellency was whirled away, leaving Jones and Sir Rothie standing on the steps of Government House.

"It's all right, I suppose," said Sir Rothie ; "if he had had anything particular to say to you I daresay he would have said it. I suppose he just wanted to congratulate you. Good-bye, Captain Jones. I hope you'll have a pleasant time of it. Take care and don't be fascinated by the Begum ;" and Sir Rothie disappeared within the *penetralia* of Government House.

The Calcutta journals next morning had each a

leader upon the Pundrapore Residency. The 'John Bull' said that the time had come when the British public must demand, by its representatives, an impartial review of the exercise of the Governor-General's patronage. "When we see the public interest sacrificed to private considerations, and nameless and unknown men promoted to positions which they are perfectly unqualified to fill, it is the duty of a free and conscientious press to demand that the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, and that such abuses as we have recently seen in the case of the Pundrapore Residency, should be rendered impossible in the future. The claims of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Robinson, Political Agent at the Court of Chotasahebpore, are too conspicuous to require that public attention should be directed to the gross injustice which has been sustained by that gallant officer; but in another quarter the Government that has offered so flagrant an insult to a meritorious servant, and that has thus hurled defiance at public opinion, will infallibly be called to account." The 'Peon' was more mild, and expressed a doubtful hope that Captain Jones might prove equal to his responsible position; but feared that Mr Rattle, the Commissioner of Saugor Island and the Lower Sunderbunds, was the only official who could have saved the Pundrapore State. "We have it upon excellent authority that Captain Jones's appointment has

been made under pressure from the Home authorities, and that it has formed the subject of a dignified protest on the part of the Government of Bengal. How long, we ask, are the hands of our administrators to be paralysed by the ignorant and interested action of their English masters, the Plutocracy of Leadenhall Street, the Octogenarians of Cannon Row?" The 'Padrepore Monitor' said the others were all wrong, and that there were special reasons for Captain Jones's appointment—reasons which could not at the present moment be laid with propriety before the public; and so people began to think that Jones must be somebody after all, for the 'Padrepore Monitor' was supposed to have good information about what went on in the back staircases of Government House.

Captain Jones went away from Calcutta with his good opinion of his own capacity very much strengthened. He had begun to look upon himself as an embryo Malcolm, and he dreamed already of missions to Persia and to Cabul, of the Foreign Secretaryship, and of a seat in Council, with perhaps the government of one of the minor Presidencies. Who knew? Such things had been, and his foot was now upon the first step of the ladder. At the *dak* bungalows on the road to Pundrapore he utilised the stoppages for the composition of a new series of epitaphs, in which he provided for all

the possible contingencies of his future career, from the Pundrapore Residency to the government of Bombay. A statue in the cathedral of Calcutta, with an inscription, "To the Memory of Major-General Sir John Jones, Knight Commander of the Bath, of the Order of the Douranee Empire, of the Burmese Tsalway, &c. &c., Whose brilliant diplomatic talents, For so many years, Shed a lustre upon the Indian Service, And secured to the British Possessions Peace and Uninterrupted Security," occupied his mind during the most of the long and wearisome journey.

When he arrived at Pundrapore he found his predecessor already gone. So disgusted was Captain Grantley at Jones's appointment, that he did not take the trouble to make over the office to him in person, but hurried off to Agra to have, as he said, "a fling" before settling down in the solitude of Kaifiabad. "Tell the fellow," he had said to Mr Harcourt, "that he will find it not quite so easy to keep the peace in Pundrapore as to smoke cheroots at the mess-table of the Junglywallahs. The Government has taken away the only man who could have held down disturbances, and the consequences be at its own door. Good-bye, Harcourt, and God send you a good deliverance from Pundrapore; for if I know anything about the place, there will soon be mischief with this new booby." Mr Harcourt thought so too, and he had put in for a

transfer from the Political to the Administrative Department so soon as he had heard of Captain Jones's appointment. But he received his new superior with formal civility, and did his best to instruct him in the duties of the office, although his surprise at the Government's selection continued to increase as he found opportunities for gauging Captain Jones's mental abilities.

The curiosity regarding the new Resident had extended even to Pundrapore. Rumour, which is always distorted in native gossip, had described the new Resident as little better than a *pagul* or fool. Fools, they said, were always fortunate, and the Big Lord Sahib had read in the stars that Pundrapore would be given over to the British by the greatest fool in the army; and so Captain Jones had been selected. If the Begum did not share in the general belief, she at least shared in the general curiosity, and waited with much anxiety for the arrival of the new Political, whose mysterious appointment she could not but think boded no good to the continuance of her authority. At this time her Highness was more than ever immersed in political intrigue. There were daily reports of a rising in Lahore, and the Begum was only waiting for the Sikhs to take the field to proclaim the independence of Pundrapore, to massacre the English in the Residency, and to declare herself sole ruler of the State during the rest of her life. The great ob-

stacle to the Begum's scheme was Taptee Rao, the minister of her late husband, who still nominally held the office of Vizier, although he did not share in the councils of his mistress. Taptee was a shrewd old Brahmin, who had sense enough to be faithful to the British and to the cause of the youthful Nawab. The many slights which the Begum had heaped upon him, and the contempt with which his advice was always treated, had sunk deep in Taptee's heart, and he was eager to thwart her ambitious designs and to reveal her plots to the Foreign Office. But the Begum conducted all her intrigues through her favourite, Faizul Khan, a wily and truculent Patan who commanded the Pundrapore troops, and whose detestation of the pork-eating English and dogs of Hindoos had raised him high in the good graces of the Regent. Faizul, it was said, even aspired to share the Pundrapore *musnud*, if the Begum were once at liberty; and it is certain that he looked with no favourable eyes upon her intimacy with Captain Grantley. The Begum had a difficult task to conciliate her two admirers, but she managed to make tools of them both, and sneered at both alike when their backs were turned.

A grand durbar was held for the reception of the new Resident, shortly after Captain Jones's arrival. It was with no little trepidation that Jones prepared himself for the ceremony. He had never been a

Mæcenas to military tailors, but his position now demanded that some attention should be paid to costume, and a number of boxes from Harman's had accompanied him to Pundrapore. When he had equipped himself in full diplomatic uniform, he stood waiting for Mr Harcourt, nervously handling his cocked-hat, and wishing that the durbar was well over. Harcourt came in smoking a cigar, and looking provokingly cool. "Hilloa!" he cried; "going to tame the Pundrapore tigress by love and the language of flowers, instead of by Sir Rothie's despatches. I declare it's quite refreshing to see a new Calcutta coat, if it didn't awaken painful reminiscences of unpaid bills. Well, shall we go and make our salaams to the Begum? It's a deuced nuisance in such a hot morning; and I hope we shall get away as soon as possible."

"Well, really, I suppose we must get it over," doubtfully replied the martyr to the mysterious policy of Government; "but you see, the fact is, that I'm somewhat new to this kind of work. I never was but at one levee in my life"—and here the ill-omened recollection of his rencontre with Sir George Blitzen darted across his memory—"I'm rather afraid—that is, I'm anxious that—that—well, yes, that the dignity of the British Government should be properly represented upon this important occasion."

Jones looked towards his subordinate with much

solemnity, as if he would have Mr Harcourt believe that his mind was troubled with official responsibility, and not with a nervous dread of appearing in public. But Harcourt was too astute a diplomatist to be thus imposed upon.

"Ah, yes, I see," he said, casting a keen glance at the Resident. "Well, all you have got to do is to look wise and ill-natured, and follow my directions: to be coldly complaisant to the Begum, to be particularly civil and gracious to old Taptee Rao, and to put on as sulky a frown as you can whenever you look in the direction of that con-founded *soor* Faizul Khan."

"I suppose I had better do something, too, about seeing the boy Nawab. Sir Rothie, in his instructions, lays special emphasis upon 'guarding against the injurious results of maternal fondness and female indulgence.' The child, of course, will be thoroughly spoiled by his doting mother."

"Ah, well, perhaps," rejoined Mr Harcourt, doubtfully. "Has it never occurred to you, Captain Jones, that by 'the injurious results of maternal fondness' Sir Rothie may have meant such mistakes as giving the child poison for sweetmeats, or wringing his neck round when playing with him in her arms? Of course you understand your own instructions better than I do, but I have known such *double entendres* often conveyed under cover of a diplomatic phrase."

“Good heavens! you are surely not in earnest, Harcourt?” cried the astonished Resident. “The Begum surely cannot be such a fiend as harm her own flesh and blood.”

“You see there is flesh and blood and flesh and blood, and the Begum cares so much for the flesh and blood that is contained within her own pretty epidermis, that she has but little affection to bestow upon external animal matter,” said Mr Harcourt, deliberately, as he lazily puffed forth smoke. “The child is in her way, and if it were not for the Government she would throttle the poor *chhokra* with as little reluctance as she would order that big brute, Faizul Khan, to knock you and me both upon the head. However, let her do her worst, and I am very much mistaken if she do not find that F. O. trumps her tricks for her.”

The two set out together for the durbar, Captain Jones’s equanimity being by no means restored by Mr Harcourt’s communications. The Resident looked admiringly at his companion, envying him his coolness; and indeed Mr Harcourt would not have been put about if he had entered the presence of the Great Mogul in the palmiest day of the Delhi empire. He sucked at his cigar until he was at the very door of the palace, where they were received with great ceremony by Taptee Rao and Faizul Khan, who marshalled them to the durbar room.

Here the Begum, a shapeless mass of silks and embroidery, showing neither features nor figure, was crouching upon a mass of velvet cushions. The officers made their salaams and took their seats, while the Residency *Munshi* read over Captain Jones's credentials in Persian for the edification of the Princess. Harcourt, who was used to Oriental fashions, squatted cosily among his cushions, and began to stare nonchalantly about him. Poor Jones, who had never sat upon anything but a chair or a regimental saddle, had much ado to arrange his long legs in a position at once easy and dignified; and he shifted about painfully all the time the *Munshi* was drawling over the despatch. Faizul Khan marked his awkwardness, and a sneer which he scarcely took pains to conceal crossed his haughty face. But it did not escape the Resident, whose eyes were wandering uneasily about the room; and remembering Harcourt's advice, he looked at Faizul Khan with a steady scowl which evidently discomposed the Pundrapore commandant. Taptee Rao saw this byplay, and enjoyed the discomfiture of his rival, making a mental resolution to turn the incident to account.

At the conclusion of the *Munshi*'s prelection, Captain Jones, by Mr Harcourt's direction, placed a *nuzzar*, or present of a few gold coins, in the Begum's hand, who muttered something in Persian of her respect for the British Government, and her

happiness to receive the distinguished Sahib who had been sent to shed light upon her court by his presence. The Resident read a few sentences in Persian from a paper which Mr Harcourt's forethought had caused to be pinned to the inside of his cocked-hat, assuring the Princess of the friendship of Government, and guaranteeing the liberties and independence of Pundrapore. The ceremony was then virtually at an end, as the attendants served the company with *attar* and *pan*; and then ensued that awkward pause which always precedes the end of an Indian visit. Captain Jones waited for the Begum's permission to go, and the Begum was on thorns until Captain Jones would take his departure. At last Harcourt's winks and nods admonished his chief to break up the meeting, and he asked her Highness's permission to depart, which was graciously granted. The mass of silks then moved from the room, and the two officers took their departure, attended by old Taptee Rao, who was all bows and smiles for the new Resident, whose arrival, he declared, "was welcome as a rain-cloud in the thirsty month of Jeth."

"*Anglicè*, welcome as a wet blanket," muttered Harcourt, *sotto voce*; adding aloud, "Here comes that amiable individual, Faizul Khan, doing his visage the gross injustice of trying to make it look agreeable and benevolent; what can be in the wind now? 'O grandmamma, what great eyes you have

got !' 'The better to see you, my sweet little pet.' Upon which of us little Red Riding Hoods would the wolf like to sup?"

Faizul Khan heard the conclusion of Mr Harcourt's remarks without understanding them in the least, although he was well acquainted with English. "Captain Sahib," he said, "her Highness has sent me to beg that you will allow her to present to your Honour her child, the young Nawab. Her Highness awaits you in the *Dewan-i-khas* of the palace."

The *Dewan-i-khas*, or public drawing-room, was a large bare-looking apartment. Its furniture presented a curious mixture of European civilisation with Oriental barbarism. Veneered cane-bottomed chairs stood side by side with rich velvet couches. The walls were hung with tawdry Parisian prints of questionable delicacy, interspersed with the weapons which the late Nawab had borne when he rode with Holkar and Ameer Khan; and the floor was bare, with the exception of a patch in the middle covered by a rich Persian carpet of gaudy colours. Captain Jones had never set his foot in a Begum's drawing-room before, and he stood wondering at the curious pictures and the strange furniture, until he heard a rustle behind him, and the Begum entered carrying her son in her arms. Her figure, no longer concealed beneath a mass of drapery, was shown to its full advantage by the simple white robe wound gracefully round her body; and a *chuddar*, or mantle

of airy muslin—called “running water” from the fineness of its texture—was thrown carelessly over her head and shoulders, its spotless whiteness setting off the raven lustre of her luxuriant hair. Her face was fair—singularly fair for an Oriental; her features were small and delicately chiselled; and her eyes, the chief criterion of a native beauty, were large, lustrous, fawn-like, and shaded by exquisitely pencilled lashes. The little head was proudly carried upon a lithe and shapely neck, and her hands were tiny and of delicate whiteness. The little Nawab had taken after his father rather than his beautiful mother, for his face was black and swarthy, and his neck thick as that of a bull-calf. Captain Jones stood rapt in admiration of the Princess, and wondering how it was possible that so fair a creature could be as ruthless as Harcourt had represented her. Before he could acknowledge her presence, even by a bow, the Begum had thrown herself at the feet of the astonished officer, and held up her hands in an attitude of pathetic supplication.

“O Sahib!” she cried, “Allah has indeed been good to Pundrapore in sending you here to protect me and my helpless child. I have heard so much of your honour and valour that we can sleep sound under your protection. Graciously accept me and my son as the humblest of your slaves.”

The Princess spoke English well; probably her intercourse with Captain Grantley had aided her to

acquire this somewhat unusual branch of an Eastern lady's education.

"Madam, I mean your Highness, I cannot bear to see you in this posture," stammered Jones, who devoutly wished that he had brought Harcourt with him; "I entreat you to rise and be seated. You may ever command my services in anything that relates to yourself or your territories, so far as consists with my duty to Government."

He took the Begum's hand and led her to a seat. "How fortunate I am, Captain Sahib, in having you sent here to aid me, a poor weak woman, in ruling this troublesome country!" said the Begum, turning her eyes full upon Jones with a look of soft blandishment. "Lord Blitzen Sahib, when at Pundrapore, said that your bravery was like that of Jamshid, and your justice renowned as King Naushirvan's."

"The devil he did," thought Jones. "It was very good of Sir George to say so, but how on earth could he have known it? He must have watched my career very closely to have such an intimate knowledge of me."

"I have many enemies, Sahib," continued the Begum. "They wish to take away the *musnud* from me and my son, and they tell lies of us to the Lord Sahib at Calcutta. How can I, a helpless widow, stand up against the words of the *Sahib log* (Englishmen)? But you will assist me; say that you will assist me! O protector of the poor,

lay your hand upon the child's head and be a father to him !”

Captain Jones, though much disconcerted by the idea of so close a relationship, did as he was requested, and promised that he would do his best to remove any misunderstanding between her Highness and the Government. The beauty and apparent helplessness of the Begum were making a considerable impression upon Jones's heart, and he mentally vowed that he would be her devoted knight and champion.

“You will not heed what Harcourt Sahib may say to you. He is deceived by Taptee Rao, my late lord's wicked minister, who hates me, and has sworn to take my life. He wishes to be regent himself. But now I may rely upon your honour and defy him.”

Jones again assured her Highness of his disposition to assist her ; and begging permission to take his leave, he bowed himself out of the room, the Princess saluting him with profound salaams, and casting tender glances after him so long as he was in sight. Scarcely had the doors closed after the Resident, when the Begum sprang to her feet, set down the child upon the floor with a bump that made him squall lustily, and ran to the window overlooking the courtyard, where Captain Jones was already getting on horseback.

“Why have they sent that father of asses here ?” she muttered in her native language, her little

hands passionately clenched, and her eyes sparkling with rage. "Can the English Sircar have meant to throw dirt upon me by sending an unknown fool to reside at my court? Well, well, upon their own heads be the issue. I shall turn their insult to my own advantage, and *when the time comes* they will miss Jones Sahib less than a better man." A smile of diabolical significance passed over the Begum's face as she said this, which boded no good to the officer who had just ridden out of the palace courtyard.

"It is utterly impossible that so lovely a woman can be so bad as they call her," soliloquised Jones, as he rode through the bazaar towards the Residency. "Harcourt must be mistaken, and I should not be surprised if that old villain Taptee Rao was at the bottom of all the slanders that have been raised upon her Highness; however, he won't deceive *me*. Who on earth could have believed that old Blitzen would have given me such a good character to the Begum? Though rough and *brusque* in his manners, Sir George is an officer of great penetration—of remarkable penetration, in fact—and he knows the service from head to tail, else he could not have known that *I* was the right man for Pundrapore. I think I ought to write and thank him for his good opinion."

And Captain Jones did write a most grateful letter to Sir George Blitzen, in which he returned

his humble thanks for the favourable opinion his Excellency had expressed of him to the Begum, and concluded by saying that he should ever strive to perform his duty so as to merit the continuance of his Excellency's approbation.

Sir George read this epistle with a puzzled look, and then after a minute's reflection burst forth into a prolonged whistle. "See here, Springer!" he cried, tossing over the letter to his secretary. "The infernal jade has got that damned booby in her toils already. I never said a word about him. However, it's all right. Just give a hint to the Quarter-master-General to see that the Pundrapore routes are correctly laid down in the road-book, for if troops aren't wanted there before the *chota bursat* (early rains), my name isn't George Blitzen." And the gallant warrior expressed his satisfaction at the posture of affairs by a volley of oaths which need not be reproduced here.

III.

Sir George Blitzen proved, however, a false prophet, for time passed on and no disturbance occurred in the Pundrapore territories. No event had yet transpired to put the Resident upon his mettle, and, fortunately for himself, his intercourse with the Begum had not passed the bounds of

diplomatic routine. Her Highness professed the utmost respect for Captain Jones's opinion, and consulted him upon everything in which she was *not* seriously interested. Jones soon began to take great credit to himself for the change he had produced in the Begum, and to boast that by a little judicious diplomacy he had transformed Pundrapore from a hotbed of sedition into one of the most loyal States in India.

"Wait a bit," said Harcourt; "don't halloo until you're out of the jungle. I like this quietness worse than her old tantrums. Although I don't see her cards, I'll give you twenty to one in gold mohurs that she is up to some preciously deep mischief all this time. It's a pity that you aren't friends with Taptee Rao nowadays, for he is the man that would be most likely to give us a tip upon the event."

But even Mr Harcourt's scepticism was somewhat staggered when the Begum one day placed in the hands of the Resident a proposal which had been made to her by the Rajah of Thagabad, a petty princeling whose lands abutted on the Pundrapore territory. The Rajah had offered his services to the Pundrapore State in case of a rising against the British, and pledged himself to bring five hundred men to the Begum's banner, provided a grant of lands which his family had formerly enjoyed in her Highness's territory were again

confirmed to him. It was, after all, a cheap demonstration of loyalty upon the Begum's part, for she knew well that the Rajah could not put fifty men in the field. She had not forgotten, either, that in a recent dispute about the marches, the Rajah had designated her by a name unpleasant to the ears of woman; and lastly, she held at that very moment, under the signature and seal of the Lion of the Punjab, a grant of the Rajah's own lands and principality. So the Rajah was relieved of the care of his property, and requested to reside in the holy city of Benares, while the Begum received a letter of thanks for her loyalty written by the Governor-General's own hand. Her Highness gave a malicious little laugh as she crumpled up his lordship's letter, and read the punishment which had befallen her enemy of Thagabad; but she professed herself to Captain Jones to be overjoyed beyond measure at the honour which his Excellency had done her.

Captain Jones sat upon his verandah on a hot September evening, smoking a cheroot and reading a Calcutta newspaper. Harcourt was away upon privilege leave, playing havoc among tigers in Dehra Dhoon, or flirting with the languid belles of Landour and Mussoorie. There was not much news in the Calcutta journal. He read of a horrid murder in Lall Bazaar, and how the police had failed to find the perpetrator. There was a column

and a half of a lecture upon "Female Education" by Baboo Bunkum Chunder Chintamony, whose own wives and daughters could not have read their *ka kha, ga gha* (the Bengalee alphabet), to have saved them from the burning ghat. And there was another address upon "Pure Theism, the only True Religion," delivered before the Cossitollah Literary Association by Baboo Jotendro Churn Chatterjee, who, a few days before, had given a thousand rupees to buy new ornaments for the family idol at Guddhapore. There was, of course, an account of another squabble among the justices, in which Commissioner Bacon, the chairman, had received the lie direct from Mr Benediction Williams, and had retorted by calling his opponent "a beggar on horseback;" but it had with some difficulty been adjusted without the intervention of fisticuffs. This was no novelty, and Jones turned languidly away to the editorial columns, where a leader announced that the Punjab was in a state bordering upon insurrection, and called upon the Government to take immediate steps for insuring the safety of the country.

It was too true. The old Lion of Lahore had been gathered to his fathers, and his sons and grandson, who inherited neither his valour nor his prudence, rapidly followed him; until the sceptre of the Khalsa came at last into the boyish hands of Dhuleep Singh, the last prince of the Punjab. His

mother, who now became the animating spirit of the Lahore Court, entertained a bitter hatred towards the British; and she was at this time the centre of a widely-spread conspiracy, which had for its object the expulsion of the English forces from at least the upper provinces of Hindostan. Of this conspiracy the Pundrapore Begum was a most active member, and constant communication was kept up between the two durbars. And upon this very evening, while Captain Jones was quietly smoking his cheroot, her Highness was reading the following missive, which a Sikh soldier, disguised as a mendicant, had just brought her:—

“To the beautiful among women, excelling in wisdom, and of manlike courage, Murwarid, Begum of Pundrapore,—Receive our wishes for your prosperity, and know that all our preparations are made for crossing the river, and the thirst of the Khalsa can only be sloked by a deep draught of English blood. You are entreated, when this reaches you, to take the field. What need of more? Prayers for the prosperity of the reign. The communication of the lowly slave, Gulloo, Maharanee of Lahore.”

The Begum well knew the meaning of this missive, which was written in a cipher intelligible only to the conspirators. All their plans had been arranged beforehand, and now the signal of insurrection was given. Impatient as the Begum

had been for revolt, she felt a hesitation to engage with the paramount power now that the time had arrived, and an ominous distrust of the issue. But it was too late to draw back. Lall Singh was by this time advancing upon the Sutledge, and the success of his forces must depend in a great measure upon her co-operation.

The Begum was for many hours closeted with Faizul Khan and a few of the most trusted officers of the Court. In a short time messengers were getting to horse, and galloping over the territory, commanding the attendance of all the Mohammedan chieftains, with their vassals. There was a considerable force always kept under arms within the State, upon pretence that troops were necessary to repress the haughty Rajpoot landholders, who could but ill brook Mussulman rule. Of this force both the Resident and Government were perfectly aware ; but beyond keeping a keen eye upon its movements they did not interfere further. A small British force was stationed at Malariabad, near the Pundrapore frontier, where such of the officers as were not suffering from the climate of that salubrious station dispensed a lavish hospitality, and organised monster sporting excursions into the thick Pundrapore jungles ; and over the movements of the Malariabad garrison the Resident had a discretionary power, should circumstances render their services necessary to him.

Captain Jones had despatched his dinner, and was sitting with open jacket and unbuckled waist-belt over a cheroot and a glass of iced brandy-and-soda, when a message was brought from the Begum, begging his instant attendance, upon a matter of importance. "What on earth does she want, I wonder?" growled Jones, reluctantly fastening his belt, and taking up his helmet and sword; "nothing that wouldn't have kept until to-morrow, I fancy. Perhaps the little Nawab has got a colic from eating too many mangoes; or some zemindar has refused to pay his rent, and the Begum wants my sanction to send a lot of troopers to recover the arrears. Wonderfully simple and beautiful is the law of restraint here in Pundrapore."

And so Jones, attended only by a single orderly, walked briskly to the palace, and was shown up into a room that had been the *duftur khana*, or business-room of the late Nawab. The Begum had not yet made her appearance, but the little Prince, who had taken a great fancy for Jones, came running into the room and clasped him by the knees.

"*Tulwar do hum ko, Capitan Sahib*" (Give me your sword, Captain), cried the child; and the boy was soon astride of the Captain's long cavalry sword, and galloping wildly about the room.

While Jones stood watching the child's gambols, Faizul Khan, with half-a-dozen Patan troopers, came suddenly behind, and threw themselves upon him.

An unequal struggle took place, and in a few minutes the Resident was lying on the ground, bound hand and foot, while Faizul Khan stood over him, with a drawn sabre pointed at his breast, threatening to slay him if he uttered a single word.

"*Mat maro Capitan Sahib, mat maro !*" (Don't beat the Captain, don't beat him), cried the little Nawab, as, with tears in his eyes, he dragged the Resident's sword towards Faizul Khan, and endeavoured to strike down the Patan's sabre.

"Take away the boy," cried Faizul Khan, hoarsely, "and secure the doors and windows. Place a sentry at each door, and let them stab the prisoner if he speaks above his breath. Make ready my horse there," he cried, as he clanked out of the room.

Jones was now left alone, lying upon the floor, and the doors were locked upon the outside. He was stupefied by the turn affairs had taken, and his mind was perfectly unable to suggest any cause for the attack which had just been made upon him. Two things were, however, apparent: that his life was in serious danger, and that there was a political disturbance about to take place. But the Begum! what of her? Had he been seized by her consent, or was Faizul Khan the leader of the insurrection, and the Princess herself also a prisoner? So sudden had been the outbreak that he could scarcely convince himself of its reality. It must be

the aged and indigestible fowl that he had eaten at dinner three-quarters of an hour before, or the cheroots, or the brandy-pawnee; and it would all pass away in a headache to-morrow morning. But no; the cords on his wrists and ankles were no nightmare phantasm, and the hard floor beneath him was a sensible reality. Brief time had, however, been given him to meditate upon his situation when the Begum hastily entered the room, attended by two armed Sirdars. Her Highness seemed to have undergone a complete transformation since Jones had last seen her. She was no longer the meek and humble widow, who had boasted of her helplessness, and had been too timorous to do anything upon her own responsibility without consulting the Resident. Her delicate features, distorted by passion, and her flashing eyes, now showed how well she merited the title of Tigress of Pundrapore. She carried a naked dagger in one hand, and a sheet of paper in the other.

“You are in my power, Captain Sahib,” she said, coldly; “listen now to what I have to say. In a few weeks the chiefs and princes of Hindostan will have beaten the British beyond the Carumnassa, and not an Englishman will be left in the upper provinces except as a prisoner. I might kill you just now, but I prefer to spare you; that is, provided you will purchase your life by obeying my commands.”

"My life is in your hands, and you may do with it as you please," said Jones, raising himself on his elbow and looking the Begum boldly in the face; "but never will I consent to purchase it at the expense of either duty or honour. I warn your Highness of the dangerous game you are playing—a game that can only end in the destruction of yourself and your principality; for the British power is like the ten heads of your demon Ravuna, which grow on again as fast as they are cut off."

"I came not here to ask your advice," said the Begum, haughtily, "but to give you my orders. Here is paper; on that table are pens and ink. Write to the commandant Sahib at Malariabad to draw off his troops to Agra, to join the division there which is about to march to the Punjab to repel the Sikhs. Do this, and I swear by the Koran that your life shall be safe. Refuse, and you die before midnight."

"Never," said poor Jones, with a groan: "do your worst, but I'll never disgrace my commission by such an act."

"Slave!" cried the Begum in a fury as she flashed the dagger above her head, "shall I have to torture you into obedience? I know not what prevents me from plunging this into your heart. Hearken, Jones Sahib; it is your last chance. I give you half an hour to consider; and if you refuse on my return, I shall put you to death with such

tortures as never Englishman yet suffered. Think well what awaits you before you make up your mind."

So the Begum and her attendants left the room, leaving Jones again to his solitary thoughts. They were far from pleasant. Death stared him in the face, for he would never save himself by complying with the Begum's commands. Though by no means possessed of a vigorous intellect, Jones had plenty of courage, and would have scorned to disgrace the British service. He tried to think seriously of his latter end, but his thoughts strayed to the Begum, to the rebellion in the Punjab, to what they would say at Government House when they heard of his murder, and to a hundred other subjects wholly irrelevant to the dread change that was approaching. He began a prayer, but long before he had got to the end of it, he found himself at his old occupation of epitaph-making, composing an inscription for a memorial which Government would erect over his slaughtered remains. He felt he could almost die in peace if he might leave behind him a suitable design for a monument; but, alas! his wrists were tied, and the hour of his death was at hand. He rolled over upon his other side, and again attempted to compose himself for prayer. "Hist, Sahib," was whispered close beside him; and rolling round again, Jones saw by the light of the lamp that swung from the ceiling, the round

bald head and smooth puffy cheeks of old Taptee Rao protruding from the floor ; "write, Sahib, write, and trust to Taptee. I faithful slave of Company Bahadoor. I shall save the Resident Sahib, and turn the plots of the Begum *ulta pulta* (upside down). She very clever woman the Begum, but Taptee Rao very more clever. Write, Sahib, and give me your seal-ring."

"Can I trust him?" thought Jones ; "or is this a new artifice of the Begum's? She hates him, and he has as much to fear as I have. It is a forlorn-hope to grasp at it."

"Quick, Sahib, quick! Begum come back directly. Give me ring, and I send for sepoy to Malariabad. I offer reward to all who desert the Begum, and I surround the palace before daybreak, and take the Begum prisoner. May dogs devour her!" added Taptee, revenge lighting up his generally stolid countenance. Jones could only reply by rolling over, and turning his back, behind which his hands were bound, towards Taptee. The minister slipped off the ring, and said, "Do as Begum bids you, Sahib ; make believe to write. I tell the commandant Sahib all beforehand. I come back directly ; they not hurt a hair of your head, Sahib." And Taptee disappeared, with a reassuring wink towards the Resident. Five minutes after, two horsemen had started for Malariabad, a distance of five-and-twenty miles, carrying intelligence of the

rebellion, and requesting the instant despatch of a force to Pundrapore.

When the Begum returned, she found Jones sulkily resigned to her wishes. "Will you write, Jones Sahib?" she cried, with a menacing flourish of her dagger; "or will you try the fare which the Begum of Pundrapore has prepared for her English guest?"

"I take these men to witness," said Jones in Hindustanee, avoiding a direct answer, "that I act under compulsion and against my own free will."

A contemptuous smile curled the Begum's lips. "It is well," she said; "life is sweet. Loose his hands and give him the pen and ink; and if he dares to make the slightest struggle, stab him to the heart."

Jones, with a sheet of paper upon his knee, wrote a formal order to the colonel commanding at Malariabad, directing him to join his division at Agra with all the garrison, in consequence of an outbreak in the Punjab, of which he, the Resident, had just received information from Government. When he had finished, the Begum took the letter and narrowly examined it, as if she would convince herself that no private communication had been conveyed under cover of the official message.

"Good, Sahib," she said; "for the present your life is spared, but if within two hours after he receives this the commandant Sahib does not march

for Agra, I shall have you blown from the biggest gun in Pundrapore."

The attendants again bound Jones's hands and left him, securing the doors and placing sentries on the outside as before. "After all, then, it is only a brief reprieve," thought Jones, "for she will of course come down on me as soon as she hears that the troops are marching to attack her. Heavens! what a booby I have been to allow myself to be deceived by that woman."

Jones lay keeping his eyes anxiously fixed upon the spot where Taptee Rao had formerly appeared. A vision of angels or cherubim would have been less welcome at that moment than Taptee's bullet-head. He had not long to wait. A piece of matting began to heave, a portion of the floor was cautiously raised, and Taptee peered warily into the room.

"All right, Sahib," he whispered; "soldiers come directly, and I send for Doorga Singh with three hundred horsemen, all Hindoos who faithful to Company's salt. Malariabad sepoy's be here before morning, and then the Begum's *raj* is done, gone, finished."

Nothing but the close proximity of the sentries, and their own critical position, could have prevented Taptee from relieving his exuberant feelings by a triumphant dance over the approaching downfall of his enemy. He drew himself up through the aper-

ture, and, taking a knife from his girdle, severed the cords that confined the Resident. "You must go from palace, Sahib," he said; "go along Malariabad road, and stay in old pagoda till I come." Jones went first through the trap-door into the room beneath, and Taptee followed, carefully arranging the flooring and mats so that the secret of the Resident's escape might remain a mystery. They found themselves in Taptee's private room, and the trap-door may perhaps serve to explain the extraordinary acquaintance which the minister possessed with all his late master's secrets.

Taptee gave Jones a sabre and pistols, and, letting him out by a private gate, directed him to the pagoda where the Resident was to wait for his arrival.

A grand council had been summoned for one o'clock in the palace hall, in which the Begum was to declare her intention of joining the Sikhs, and the nobles were to proclaim her sole ruler of Pundrapore during her lifetime. Her Highness had been closeted with Faizul Khan and other sirdars, devising ways and means for equipping a large force which was to be instantly despatched to the Lahore army. The point of greatest importance that still remained to be settled was the fidelity of Taptee Rao. Faizul Khan, who wanted his place, volunteered to murder him without further delay; but the Begum knew the influence which

the minister possessed among the Hindoo chiefs and Brahmins of Pundrapore, and resolved if possible to obtain his assistance. Taptee entered the hall where several chiefs were already assembled, with a face of smiling innocence, making careless inquiries why the council had been summoned. His jocular manner formed a singular contrast to the anxious and restless demeanour of the other councillors, who stared aghast at Taptee's reckless appearance, and turned away impatiently from his broad jokes. At last the Begum entered the hall, attended by Faizul Khan and half-a-score of Sirdars. Without preface, her Highness explained the state of affairs, and eloquently urged the nobles to take up arms for their country and for religion. She had, she said, at the earnest request of her subjects, consented to rule over them so long as she lived; and she now begged the council to show its confidence by committing to her the sole direction of the expedition which was to be sent to the Punjab. Loud cries of "*Din! din!*" (for the Faith, for the Faith) showed that the enthusiasm of the Mohammedan chiefs had been aroused; and the Begum, smiling graciously, continued, "But first we must know who are our friends and who our foes. Taptee Rao, you have heard our proposals; will you, who have eaten our bread and our salt, turn against your rightful ruler and take part with the infidel English against your country?"

“Gracious Queen!” said Taptee, sidling forward with a bland visage, “Asylum of the Universe and Protector of the Poor, if my humble services can in any wise be acceptable, deign to cast thine august eyes with favour upon the humblest of thy slaves.”

“I commend your fidelity,” said the Begum. “Retain your present post in our court, and when the British are driven from the country, we shall find some means of rewarding you!”

Taptee clasped his hands in an ecstasy of gratitude. “Most mighty sovereign,” he said, “if your slave might be permitted to speak, he would say that in three hours he will bring his kinsman, Doorga Singh, with three hundred troopers, to your Highness’s standard.”

The Begum uttered an exclamation of joy. Doorga Singh was a haughty Hindoo noble with whom she had been long at feud, and she had never dared to expect assistance from him.

“Taptee Rao,” she cried, “the *raj* of Thagabad is yours from this day, for the Lahore durbar has gifted it to me. Continue as you have begun, and your reward shall be great beyond your conception.”

Faizul Khan ground his teeth and muttered an oath, while Taptee again prostrated himself before the Begum, overpowered by his grateful feelings. The wily Princess had not abated any of her hatred to the minister, but she knew how important it was at so critical a period to appear generous and con-

ciliatory to her Hindoo subjects. Taptee begged her Highness to allow him to depart for a space that he might send the necessary instructions to his kinsman, Doorga Singh; and he waddled out of the room, pausing every second to invoke a blessing upon the head of his benefactress, and a prayer for the prosperity of her reign.

As soon as he quitted the hall, Taptee hurried off to his room, and hastily concealing a small bag of precious stones beneath his clothes, and catching up a sword, he hurried off to the old pagoda to join the Resident. He found Captain Jones pacing up and down the ruins in a fever of anxiety. Every few minutes the stillness was broken by the clatter of hoofs, as messengers dashed off with intelligence of the revolt. What delayed the troops from Malariabad? surely they ought to have been here before this time. But Malariabad was a good five-and-twenty miles off, and Taptee Rao's messenger would have little more than reached the cantonments. He felt relieved when Taptee joined him, and the two waited in the ruins, looking out anxiously towards the palace, where lights flitting about from window to window told of the bustle that was going on inside.

The council was not yet broken up. The Begum, assisted by Faizul Khan, received from the various chiefs the strength of the forces they could bring to the Pundrapore standard, and by bribes and lavish

promises settled rival claims to command. Still no troops had arrived, and her Highness ever cast an anxious look towards the door for the return of Taptee Rao and his promised auxiliaries. The Begum started as she noticed a Sikh sowar, his dust-coloured uniform bespattered with mud, and his blue turban torn by riding through the jungles, make his way into the hall, and with little ceremony elbow a road through the excited crowd of Mohammedan chiefs, who were boasting loudly of the feats which they were to perform in the coming campaign. With a rough salaam he handed a note to the Begum and fell back among the throng.

The note ran thus, after the usual compliments :—

“The Sirdar Juwaher Singh, our trusted vizier, has been slain by traitors before our eyes. The ‘drum of religion’ is for the present silenced. You are entreated to take no steps until you hear further from us. May the hour of our deliverance be at hand.—GULLOO.”

The Begum, as she read the letter, drew a long breath and looked down upon the scene before her. There they were, every one clamouring for battle; the nobles with drawn swords vaunting their bravery or disputing for precedence; Moulvies bustling about and stimulating the doubtful to war against the English *Kaffirs*; and there in a corner stood Faizul Khan, surrounded by a group of chiefs, with whose assistance he was laying down a plan

of the morrow's march. And now the game was all up. She had cast the die, only to be beaten at the first throw. What was to be done? Should she at once tell the chiefs whom she had duped, and yield herself a victim to their fury, or wait rather until General Linstock came to carry her off as a prisoner to Benares or Chunar? Then there was the Resident—what was to be done with him? Should she give him his liberty, and make him an intercessor for her with the Governor-General, or slay him on the spot as an atonement to her baffled ambition? A thought struck her; why should not she escape to the Punjab with a few trusty followers, and take with her the Resident as an offering to the Sikh chiefs? He would at all events be useful as a hostage.

"Faizul Khan," she cried, "bring down the prisoner. I would learn from him the strength of the garrisons between this and Lahore."

Faizul Khan readily departed, delighted at the opportunity afforded him of annoying his enemy Captain Jones. Scarcely had he left the hall when the tramp of a body of horse was heard, and attendants came running to announce the arrival of Doorga Singh and his troopers. The Begum's face became yet more ashy pale. "Fresh victims," she muttered; "but why should I regret them? they are only Hindoo dogs. Would that no blood of the Faithful may rest upon my head. Greet the leaders

from us," she said aloud, "and invite them into our presence."

Doorga Singh came in, surrounded by a throng of Hindoo chieftains. He was a tall thin Mahratta, whose broad shoulders and long arms indicated great personal strength. He was armed with sword and shield, and bore the long Mahratta spear in his right hand. The Mohammedan chiefs twirled their mustaches, and looked with scarcely dissembled disgust upon the group of infidels as they pushed through the throng to the Begum's presence.

No reverence did Doorga Singh make to her Highness, and the Begum sat pale and almost shivering, waiting for an explanation of his strange demeanour; but before she could summon courage to speak, the Hindoos parted, and forward stepped the Resident with Taptee Rao hard at his heels.

"*Khiyānat, Khiyānat!*" ("Treachery, treachery!") shrieked the Begum, springing from her seat as the truth flashed upon her mind. "Faizul Khan, Abdul Ruhman, down with these Hindoo dogs! slay them for sons of burned fathers!"

"Hold!" cried Captain Jones before a man could stir, "your Highness is entirely in our hands, and resistance is useless. The palace is filled with Mahratta troopers, and a large British force is close to the city. Resistance is worse than madness. Surrender, your Highness, and you, chiefs and

sirdars, lay down your arms, and be assured that all possible leniency will be shown to your fault by Government."

Faizul Khan here came rushing in in alarm. "Asylum of the Universe," he cried, "the prisoner ——" but seeing the aspect of affairs, he drew his sword and sprang upon the Resident. Doorga Singh received the Patan upon the point of his spear, and in an instant the wretched man lay writhing in the death-struggle at the foot of the *musnud*. A *mêlée* immediately ensued. Doorga Singh, shouting the Mahratta war-cry, "*Hur, hur Mahadeo!*" threw away his spear, and rushed sword in hand upon the Mohammedans. Mahrattas came crowding into the hall, and, wielding their long spears over the heads of the combatants, galled the Mussulmans, and made them an easy prey to those with whom they were engaged. The Resident stood by the Begum shouting to the Mahrattas to spare all who laid down their arms, but his words were unheeded in the heat of the conflict. In a few minutes the rebels were all overpowered or slain, and the Pundrapore rebellion was at an end. As for the Begum, she had tried to stab herself with her dagger, but Jones and Taptee had snatched it from her hand. She now sat looking upon the scene, like a tigress that has been disappointed in her prey. "Take me away, Captain Sahib; take me away," was all that she

could utter, in a voice so husky as to be almost inaudible ; and away she was led, Taptee taking care that her prison should be more secure than the one she had provided for the Resident.

Morning was beginning to glint through the hall windows, revealing Jones upon the Pundrapore *musnud* refreshing himself with pale ale and cold pie which a servant had fetched from the Residency. By him squatted Taptee, who, regardless that the sacrilegious Sahib was eating the sacred flesh of kine, was holding an animated discussion with him on the future management of Pundrapore. At a respectful distance lay or squatted Doorga Singh and his officers, sleeping or smoking their *hookhas* ; and close by them were the prisoners bound hand and foot, while the corpses of the slain were being carried from the hall. The noise of cavalry interrupted Taptee's confidences, and Colonel Beaton, of Beaton's Horse, the commandant of Malariabad, came rattling into the room.

"Why, damn it, Jones, you don't mean to say that it is all over?" cried he pettishly, as he looked round at the prisoners. "Couldn't you have kept them going until we came up? It's what I call doing the shabby thing to take fellows off their *charpoy*s (beds) at one o'clock in the morning for nothing, and we have nearly blown every horse in the regiment with the gallop."

Jones rapidly explained the events that had oc-

curred during the night, and told Colonel Beaton that it might still be necessary to scour the state to suppress any chiefs that had taken arms by the Begum's orders.

"All right!" cried Beaton eagerly, "we may have some sport yet. Let the men breathe their horses, Morris, and let them sound to saddle in an hour and a-half *tik* (exactly). I wonder if there is anything edible to be had here for *chota hazree* (early breakfast)? And I say, Jones, I'll tell you what I shall do for you. I'll leave you Penninck, who writes for the 'Peon.' He is a dab at doing reports, and will make up a beautiful story to tell the Government. Besides, the little beast has no more seat than a wool-pack, and would be always tumbling off if we came to any stiff riding."

And so when Colonel Beaton and his officers had done justice to a nondescript though plenteous meal, they galloped off to hunt for rebels, leaving Cornet Penninck on special duty at the Residency.

IV.

The Pundrapore insurrection caused a great sensation in Calcutta. Would Government annex the territory? Some said that Sir George Blitzen was already marching to Pundrapore at the head of two divisions of all arms of the service to depose the

Begum and annex the state. Others were certain that the Governor-General would do nothing of the kind; that the present crisis demanded conciliatory measures; and that the Begum would be well "wiggged," and reinstated in the Regency. Mr Waspbite, the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, was besieged with inquiries at his club in Chowringhee, until even *his* amiable temper was exhausted, and he said, "Damn the Pundwapoah Wesidency. If you want to know you should ask the Govenah-Genewal."

The press likewise had its say upon the subject. 'The Padrepore Monitor and Weekly Evangelist' reminded its readers how often in the course of the previous ten years it had constantly predicted that affairs at Pundrapore would turn out exactly as they had happened. The editor conjured the Governor-General to do his duty and annex the principality, undeterred by the howls of native opinion, and regardless of the ignorant and interested views of English statesmen. "With an able British Officer, such as Mr Caird, the energetic Magistrate of Cholerapore, at the head of the administration, and an efficient educational staff under the Rev. Fungus M'Bain, the eminent Free Church Missionary, as Director of Public Instruction, upon a salary of not less than Rs. 700 per mensem, with a free bungalow, a new and happier era would soon dawn upon the benighted regions of Pundrapore.

The importance of the last-named appointment cannot be too strongly impressed upon his Excellency's consideration," &c. &c.

The 'Peon' scarcely expressed an opinion, but, as might have been expected, dwelt at length upon the valuable services which Cornet P. R. Penninck, of Beaton's Horse, had rendered in restoring order at the Residency and the Palace, an account of which occupied one and a-half columns of leaded type. The 'John Bull' bluntly said that the Government ought to do justice. "Visit with a fitting punishment the Begum and her fellow-conspirators, but why should an innocent child suffer for the misconduct of his guardian? Let us train the young Nawab to be a wise and judicious ruler, and place an experienced officer in charge of the state during his Highness's minority. In this manner we shall best refute the slanderous writers who would attribute to the Company's government an insatiable lust for territory. The name of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Robinson, Political Agent of Chotasahebpoore, must of course occur to every one who has bestowed a serious thought upon the guardianship of the young Nawab and the future management of the Pundrapore state," &c. &c.

When the news of the Pundrapore insurrection reached Government House, a special meeting of the Executive Council was forthwith summoned. The members met in the evening in the old Council

Chamber to determine the destiny of Pundrapore. If the *genius loci* could have prevailed, the independence of Pundrapore would have stood but a sober chance, for around them upon the walls hung the portraits of the statesmen and warriors who had done most to extend the British power in India. There was Clive, who gave Bengal, Behar, and Orissa to the Company's territories; Wellesley, the conqueror of Mysore, the Carnatic, and Maharashtra; with Hastings, Cornwallis, Eyre Coote, and Minto. But the golden age of annexation was past, and the pagoda-tree was fast falling into the sere and yellow leaf. There was a strong party in Parliament hostile to the Company, who never ceased to denounce each fresh extension of territory as another instance of arbitrary rapacity, seizing eagerly upon every new aggression as a ground for renewing the attack; and so the Calcutta statesmen were compelled to go cautiously to work in the case of Pundrapore.

"It appears to me, gentlemen," said the Governor-General during that little standing confabulation which always preceded the formal sitting, and in which the real business of the meeting was generally settled—"it appears to me that we have no real ground for proceeding to extremities against the state. The Nawab is but a child, and it would be hardly fair to make a minor answerable for the misdeeds of his guardian."

"All owing to that fellow Jones," growled the Honourable Mr Elchey, who, having been Resident at the Court of Cooch Behar, claimed a leading voice in all diplomatic business. "If he had but kept out of the way and given them rope enough, the whole state would have been up, and then there would have been a good excuse for annexation. But the political department is going to the devil. When I was resident at Cooch Behar, your Excellency, there was an old Thakoor who had got a *ta'allukae zabardasti*, and the Government wanted——"

"But in this case, Mr Elchey, I don't think any blame can attach to the Political officer," said the Governor-General, unceremoniously interrupting the ex-diplomatist, whose reminiscences of Cooch Behar were notoriously prosy, and so full of Hindustani phrases as to be intelligible only to a member of the Revenue Board. "Captain Jones appears to have acted as judiciously as the circumstances admitted, and his report is really an admirably written document, quite different from anything that we have had before from Pundrapore. Besides we shall have the Punjab soon upon our hands, and can easily forego the pleasure, for the present, of gathering Pundrapore under the Company's wing."

"What was that mystery about Captain Jones's appointment, my Lord?" asked Mr Elchey; "everybody said there was some special reason for his

selection that has never come before the Council? None of the members, to my certain knowledge, ever heard the man's name before."

"Really, Mr Elchey, you have no more reason to complain than I have. Sir George Blitzen had been down in Pundrapore inquiring into Grantley's management, or rather mismanagement, and his Excellency reported so strongly in favour of Grantley's withdrawal that I had him at once transferred to Kaifiabad; and I wrote to Sir George begging him to recommend one of his best officers for the vacancy, for it was necessary in the unsettled condition of Pundrapore that the Resident should be a military man. He recommended Jones, and I appointed him on Sir George's recommendation, and there the story ends; and I must say that Captain Jones has not disgraced the Commander-in-Chief's patronage."

"Well, he must have been a very modest man to hide his light so completely under a bushel," said, with a satiric laugh, General Brymston, the military member, whose nephew, Colonel Congreve, had been among the disappointed candidates.

"Just what I said to Sir George, General," said his Excellency; "and all the answer I got was, '*he's the man for Pundrapore*;' and really I don't think we have any reason to complain."

And so the Council sat down, and resolved that the Begum of Pundrapore should await the pleasure of Government, under surveillance, at the fortress

of Chunar; that Taptee Rao should be advanced to the dignity of Rae Bahadoor, and should take charge of the fiscal and judicial management of the Pundrapore state, in conjunction with the British Resident; and that the latter officer should act as guardian of the young Nawab's person, and make such provision as was necessary for the maintenance and education of a prince of his rank.

But the public had not yet heard the last of Pundrapore. Mr Deek, M.P., who wanted to get into the Board of Control, and was taking a course of the Calcutta papers, had stumbled upon Captain Jones's appointment. To find Pundrapore in the map of India, and to turn up the history of the principality in 'Thornton's Gazetteer,' was the work of an instant; and that very night Mr Deek gave notice that he would call the attention of the Right Honourable the President of the Board of Control to a recent instance of the exercise of the Governor-General's patronage, and call for the production of the papers connected with the appointment of Captain Jones to the Pundrapore Residency. And Mr Deek did call attention to the Pundrapore Residency in a speech which lasted two hours and a half, in the course of which he detailed the history of Pundrapore from the invasion of Mohammed of Ghizni down to Captain Jones's appointment, quoting largely from 'Mill's History,' 'The Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds,' and the

‘Charter Blue-Books.’ There were scarcely forty members present when the President was roused from his slumbers to defend the Government of Bengal. “There would nothing,” said the right honourable gentleman, “have given the Board of Control so much pleasure as to produce the papers which the honourable gentleman had so eloquently called for, *if they only had existed*. As for the appointment of Captain Jones, it was easily explained; he was the fittest man for the post. I may mention,” continued the President, “that a despatch has this day been received by the Board, stating that the officer whose appointment has been called in question has saved the Pundrapore state from a very serious insurrection, and has probably spared the Government the unpleasant task of annexing the territory. I shall be very happy, in the course of a few days, to lay the paper upon the table for the information of the honourable member who takes such an interest in the affairs of Pundrapore.” The President sat down, and Mr Deek collapsed into the smallest possible bulk, cursing his unlucky curiosity, as he read next morning in the ‘Times’ that “in reply to a question from Mr Deek, the President of the Board of Control said so and so.” His great speech was thus denied to posterity.

The President was right; there were no official papers connected with Captain Jones’s appointment. Sir George Blitzen is dead and gone, and we shall

offer no indignity to the memory of that distinguished soldier if we print the following private epistle which has come into our hands:—

"From Major-General Sir GEORGE BLITZEN, K.C.B. K.H., to Major SPRINGER, Military Secretary on leave at the Presidency.

"MUSSOORIE, 16th March 18 .

"MY DEAR SPRINGER,—I have just got back here again, and deuced glad I am to escape the infernal heat of the plains. The march from Pundrapore was as hot as if there had been only a sheet of pasteboard between us and the devil's own dominions. Talking of Pundrapore, there will be a nice mess there one of these days. The Begum is a tigress—a perfect hyena for untamableness. In fact I may say she is the only woman that ever braved George Blitzen, and I saw *something* of the sex when I was a *chhokra* with Sir Arthur in the Peninsula. A nice game she and that drawing-room soldier Grantley are playing, but I will put a spoke in her wheel. The Governor-General has given me the nomination of the next Resident, and by G—d I'll send her the ugliest fellow in the Service. Now, Springer, you must find out who that clumsy clown was that poked his head into my stomach at Bustlepore, for as sure as my name is George Blitzen he shall have the post. My lady Begum

will then find that, if her plots can only be carried out by making love to the Resident, she must at least make love to a less pleasant object than Grantley. As for his qualifications, they be damned. Pundrapore must be annexed within the year, and it does not matter a straw what sort of a Resident is sent there. If the Begum knock the new man upon the head, the service will more easily spare him than a better officer. Bring up a lot of pickles and tinned meats with you, for the *ménage* here is beastly ; and try and persuade Mrs Cockett—Cockett of the Toshakhana Office's wife, you know—that the air of Mussoorie would be salubrious for her constitution during the next two months. There are three or four Rattle girls here, who are very jolly, and have been flirting heavily with some of the 14th. Order every 14th man to join his regiment without delay. Send a packet of 'Calcutta Christian Intelligencers' by overland mail to Lady Blitzen, who is fond of that sort of literature.—Ever yours,

GEORGE BLITZEN."

This letter bears the following indorsement in the hand of the late Colonel Springer, C.B. :—
"Poor Sir George! will ever the man grow old? Captain Jones, of the Junglywallahs, may thank his Excellency's *spretæ injuriam formæ* for a snug berth."

And this was the mystery of Captain Jones's

appointment. Captain Jones discharged the duties of his post with some credit until Captain Grantley's retirement from the Kaifiabad Residency, when, upon the recommendation of his patron, Sir George Blitzen, he was transferred to that innocent office, and Mr Harcourt succeeded to Pundrapore. During the remainder of his service in the East, Jones continued to be held in great respect among diplomatists, and when he retired, the 'Peon' devoted half a column to his merits and services—it was in the "silly season," when news was scarce. The Captain—he is now Colonel, however—still lives upon his laurels, and devotes his leisure to his favourite task of composing epitaphs, in none of which does he omit his valuable services rendered to Government when he filled the Residency of Pundrapore.

FALSELY ACCUSED:

A CRIMINAL TRIAL IN NÜRNBERG, 1790.

[MAGA. FEB. 1859.]

NO one can forget Nürnberg who has ever, even for a few hours, rambled through its mediæval streets. It remains a living type of the vanished past. Not a modern building is to be seen; for even those houses which were erected yesterday have been fashioned after the sixteenth-century model, or earlier. Hence, although the situation of Salzburg and Prague gives them a certain picturesque superiority over all other German cities, there is no city in Europe so interesting, so perfect an historical picture, as this Nürnberg, every house of which has a physiognomy of its own, every street of which is a panorama. The varied gables, the quaint windows, the high roofs, the fantastic galleries, towers, and doorways, with the endless effects of colour, make the streets a perpetual delight to the traveller. Here one feels thoroughly at home in the past. The lives of our forefathers become

intelligible. One only needs a change of costume in the busy crowds to make the picture complete.

While no change whatever has come over the spirit of the architecture, there has, happily, a profound change come over the spirit of criminal law in Nürnberg; and if the lover of medieval institutions wants an illustration of those times which will make him join with the lover of progress in blessing the results of the wiser laws which in our day regulate society, imperfect, and in many respects still barbarous, as these are, let him attend to the narrative of the following Trial, which occurred in Nürnberg at the very close of the last century.¹ Among criminal trials it has an exceptional interest, which is, however, more psychological than legal, and the mystery is even yet not cleared up.

On the 30th June 1790, at five in the morning, the merchant Johann Marcus Sterbenk was awakened by his maid-servant, with the unpleasant news that the doors of the house, and the counting-house, stood open, and that from the latter the iron cash-box had been stolen. As this cash-box contained two thousand gulden in silver (about two hundred pounds reckoning by our standard, but really a much larger sum in those days), the agitation of Sterbenk may be conceived. He hastened to the

¹ For the details we are indebted to the *Neue Pitaval*, edited by Hitzig und Häring, vol. xxi. pp. 349-410. This voluminous work contains many interesting and many trivial cases, all recorded with true German tediousness and want of method.

counting-house with his clerks and servants, found that a pane of glass had been removed from the window, which looked from the counting-house on the staircase, and that the door was wide open. The maid said that she had bolted the house-door overnight. The reader must remember that in Continental houses the house-door, or *porte cochère*, is the entrance to all the dwellings contained in one pile of building; and, unlike our English houses, merely admits to the vestibule. The separate doors have to be unlocked after entrance has been effected through the house-door. In this case the house-door had no lock; nothing but a bolt, which the maid declared she had pushed into its staple. She had heard no sound whatever during the night, such as the opening of this door would occasion; but on descending in the morning to take in the milk when the milkwoman rang, she was surprised to find this milkwoman inside the house—the door having yielded to her accidental pressure. Alarmed, she looked to the counting-house door, and found that also open. She looked in, and found the iron cash-box missing.

It was at once evident that the robbery must have been committed by some one perfectly acquainted with the localities. This very pane of glass which had been removed was the same that, ten days before, Sterbenk had ordered to be taken out when one of the clerks had lost the key of the

counting-house, and it was necessary to open the door from within, which could be effected by a man's thrusting his arm through this opening, and thus reaching to the lock. A messenger, named Schönleben, remarked that this was very suspicious.

But whom to suspect? At present there was not a clue. The whole town rang with the news; and gossips on the door-steps and in beer-shops freely vented their hypothetical suspicions, as is usual in such cases. A shopkeeper swore that on the night in question about two o'clock he quitted the tavern *zum Reichsadler*, where he had been in jovial company, and saw two suspicious-looking fellows in the neighbourhood of the Sterbenk house, who crossed the Horse-market; a barber also swore that he saw two men that night near the house, and had asked them the time; a maid-servant declared that she had seen a young man the day before standing opposite the house, considering it attentively. But as these witnesses could neither identify the persons they had seen nor give any other clue, their attestations shed little light over the question.

Suddenly suspicion settled on Schönleben, the messenger, who had found the history of the pane of glass so suspicious. It grew and grew, till it became very like conviction. He happened to say to one of the shopboys that "if he could only be certain the cash-box had been carried across the Fish-market, as report said, he would easily trace

out the rest." This remark, surely not very compromising, seems to have excited attention. It was remembered that his life had not been blameless; and the busy imaginations of men instantly built up a thousand probabilities to convict him. The very day after the robbery, his brother, a peasant living in a neighbouring village, had called upon him at the Sterbenk house, had spoken with him in an undertone, and then had quitted the town with his dung-cart—"of course carrying away the cash-box in this cart," as quick imaginations readily divined. It was further remembered that some days before the robbery, Schönleben had twice made his appearance at the counting-house an hour later than usual, for which he could only give very unsatisfactory excuses; and the day after the robbery he had affected a forced jocularitv, &c. &c. On *such* indications was this man arrested.

It was clear that Schönleben could not alone have accomplished the crime. His accomplice was soon fixed on. It was Beutner, a poor spangle-maker. The indications against him were these: he was poor; he had assisted Schönleben to carry a load of wood into the Sterbenk house, and in doing so passed up the stairs leading to the counting-house; arrived at the top stair, he was said to have paused there some minutes, looking intently into the counting-house, fascinated by the sound of the money he heard chinking there. This was asserted by more

than one witness, although resolutely denied by him. It *could* only be from a desire to make himself familiar with the locality previous to his criminal attempt. He also was arrested.

The idea of arresting, imprisoning, and examining two men on such evidence as this will astound the reader; but he will be still more astounded on learning that the possibility of their being innocent was never entertained. They were assumed to be criminals; and all that remained was to extort, or entrap, a confession of their guilt.

While the cumbrous procedure of those days was being carried out against these men, a new clue seemed to have been discovered, of far greater importance than any yet detected. A barber, named Kirchmeier, upon whom let the reader's attention be fixed, called on Sterbenk, and, under the seal of secrecy, as regarded himself, declared that, "unless he was mistaken," he had, on the morning of the 30th June, seen a cash-box, very closely resembling that which was advertised in the papers as the one stolen, in the room of the gilder Maunert, who lived in the same house with Schönleben. Kirchmeier called a day or two after the 30th on Maunert, and the cash-box was no longer visible. This Kirchmeier was a citizen of Nürnberg, the father of a large family, well-to-do in the world, bearing the character of an upright, religious man. His testimony was considered unimpeachable; a fatal credulity was the result. On the unsupported

testimony of this man, human beings were not only imprisoned, but tortured and destroyed.

Maunert, the accused, was married, the father of two sons aged ten and fifteen, very poor, but hitherto of blameless reputation. He was arrested and examined. He denied that he had ever had any such cash-box, painted or gilded, in his possession. He knew Schönleben, knew that he was Sterbenk's messenger, but knew nothing of his private affairs. Maunert's wife and sons also denied that any such box had been in their house. Kirchmeier, confronted with the accused family, declared that, on the 30th June, at eight in the morning, as he entered Maunert's room, to shave him, he saw under the table, near the oven, an iron box with green stripes, the top painted with flowers, the lock ornamented with four painted oak-leaves, which he now perfectly well remembered, and could describe. He never saw that box afterwards.

Kirchmeier was so honoured a citizen, and his statement was so explicit, and so firmly insisted on by him, that inasmuch as he seemed free from all possible motive in the matter, not bearing any malice towards the Maunerts, but, on the contrary, testifying to their being, as far as he knew, honest, truthful people, the idea of doubting his declaration never entered the heads of the Nürnburgers, assuredly not of the executive, which at once cast Maunert into a dark solitary cell, and his wife into a cell with condemned women.

Maunert's lodgings were searched. Neither cash-box, nor trace of any burglarious instrument, could be found, but—and this was thought important—in a lumber-room one of the planks showed traces of having been lately raised, and with inexperienced hands restored to its place. After this, nothing was needed but the full confession of the crime.

Schönleben firmly denied any knowledge of the crime or the criminals; nor could he name any one on whom his suspicions fell, although he would say that Beutner, on the occasion of helping him with the load of wood, did ask where the counting-house was, and whether all the people in the house slept above. He knew nothing of Beutner's having stood looking into the counting-house, as had been asserted. He denied everything that was alleged against him, or explained it away. There is one point in his evidence which is noticeable, and was much noticed—namely, that he described the cash-box in precisely the same terms as those employed by Kirchmeier in reference to the box seen in Maunert's room. This gave additional weight to the barber's testimony; for, it was argued, how could Kirchmeier, who had never been in Sterbenk's house, and consequently had never seen the cash-box there, accurately describe it, unless he had actually seen it? He described it precisely as the messenger who saw it daily; and what he described was, he averred, under the table in Maunert's room.

Now Maunert and his wife distinctly denied ever having had *any* cash-box whatever in their rooms.

Beutner, the spangle-maker, on being questioned respecting his dialogue with Schönleben, admitted its truth, but said he was in liquor at the time, and knew not much what he had talked about. Of the crime, or the criminals, he knew absolutely nothing; and as proof that he was not concerned in the robbery either as principal or assistant, he offered to prove an *alibi*. Unhappily for him, this proof was far from satisfactory, and the suspicion deepened against him. The witnesses he called did not admit that he was with them drinking till two in the morning; but, on the contrary, declared they had accompanied him home at eleven. Now if he reached home by eleven, there was abundance of time for him to have committed the robbery.

The examination of the Maunerts now occupied the court. It was determined to put in force the rigour of the law to extort a confession. Kirchmeier reiterated, and even added to his former statements, and declared himself ready, if necessary, to affirm them on oath. In those days the criminal law did not absolutely require witnesses to be sworn; only in extreme cases was the oath administered; and the punishment of perjury was very severe. The oath was a last step, when the evidence was otherwise imperfect. Now as the two Maunert boys, on being interrogated, and

solemnly warned to speak the truth, persisted in unwavering denial of having ever seen such a box ; and suggested that what the barber saw must have been a painted box filled with plaster-cast medallions, which indeed was under the table, but not behind or near the door ; this steady denial forced the court to administer the oath.

Kirchmeier again declared his readiness to take the oath, which he could do with a clear conscience. He was solemnly warned to consider what he said, to be quite clear with himself as to whether the box seen by him was really such a box as the one stolen ; the severe punishment of perjury was rehearsed to him ; and the oath was slowly read aloud to him. He remained unshaken. The despairing Maunerts on their knees implored him to have pity ; adjured him by all that he held sacred not to ruin them ; pointed to their children in hopes of moving him. Kirchmeier was immovable. In calm and solemn tones he took the oath. Nothing that was said made him swerve in his statement that he had seen the box. "That which I saw, I saw : the green painted cash-box with green wooden legs, I saw in the rooms of the man who is now kneeling imploringly before me. I cannot help it. I am quite convinced that in this I am not mistaken. His blood be on my head !"

It was done. The oath had been taken. God had heard it, and would avenge it if false. The

excitement was not confined to Nürnberg and Franconia; all Germany shared in it. Pamphlets, pictures, and discussions made it the talk of the day. The court, after Kirchmeier's solemn testimony, saw in the accused nothing but hardened and obstinate sinners; the public shared this conviction. So high ran the feeling against all the accused on account of their obstinacy, that the mob smashed Schönleben's windows, and his youngest child was killed in its mother's arms by a stone.

Kirchmeier, the demon of this story, after his damnatory oath, communicated fresh indications of Maunert's criminality, which, of course, helped to confirm the prejudice against the unhappy man. He stated that some days after he had seen the box in Maunert's rooms, he had called on him and narrated how he had just seen Schönleben's wife carried through the crowd by the police, accused of having with her husband stolen Sterbenk's cash-box; whereupon Maunert said, "And what compensation will these poor people get if they are innocent?" Surely a very natural and humane question: too humane apparently for general appreciation then, since it was interpreted as a sign of guilt by a logical process not unexampled in public reasonings. A week later, the barber again called on Maunert, and showed him the newspaper in which a reward was offered for the detection of the criminals. Maunert remarked—"How could Ster-

benk imagine that the robber would be discovered merely if poor people were observed to have or spend more money than usual? He, Maunert, happened to have lately been paid some debts, and was in possession of more money than usual; but he did not suppose that suspicion could fall on him on that account."

It cannot escape the reader as something peculiarly removed from modern jurisprudence, that not only should such implicit reliance have been placed on the barber's assertions, unsupported as they were, but that no suspicion seems to have been awakened at his remarkable freedom from all inculpation of Maunert till after Schönleben and Beutner had been examined. He declares that the very day of the robbery he saw the cash-box in Maunert's room. But he said nothing. When Schönleben was arrested, he called on Maunert, in continuance of friendly relations with the man whom he must have suspected to be the thief. A week afterwards he calls again; and although all Nürnberg is discussing the question—Who is the thief?—and every one is freely suggesting suspicions, the barber is silent as to Maunert. Of this no notice seems to have been taken. Had the accused employed an advocate, it would have been duly insisted on.

A confession the court would have; and as Maunert obstinately refused to confess, he was ordered to be flogged. The flogging extorted no-

thing but groans and denials. He was flogged again; but, as the judicial report naïvely remarks, "although he showed an extreme susceptibility to the stripes, he was not to be brought to confess; on the contrary, stoutly maintained his innocence, but begged that a full investigation of his whole life might be made, which would show he had always lived honestly and above suspicion." Nothing of the kind was undertaken. In those days—the close of the "enlightened" eighteenth century—it did not occur to men to ask, What compensation will the innocent receive if their innocence is proved?

After this a second search was made in Maunert's dwelling; but nothing was found which in any way bore on the robbery. Schönleben's dwelling was also searched, with equally fruitless result. What was to be done? It was clear these men were guilty; but their obstinacy set justice at defiance. How extort a confession? Appeals to their terrors had been tried, and failed. Examination and cross-examination had been tried, and failed. Floggings had been tried, and failed. There remained only two resources: first, the Priest, and next—the Rack.

The power of the priest in extorting confession, even from the most hardened criminals, had often successfully been employed; accordingly, two celebrated Nürnberg theologians and preachers, Schöner and Fuchs, were commissioned to try their powers. The public expectation was raised by the news of

this. Every one felt assured that, hardened as these criminals were, the spiritual influence of such men as Schöner and Fuchs would be irresistible, and justice would at length be satisfied.

Alas! even this failed. The priests reported that the two sons, no less than Maunert and his wife, repeated that they knew nothing whatever of the cash-box, that Kirchmeier had perjured himself, and that God would even yet make their innocence manifest. "And," said Schöner, "when I warned Maunert's wife of that judgment which awaited her in another world, which none could escape, however they might escape the judgment in this world; when I painted in glowing terms the terrors of eternal damnation, the immovable justice of the Lord, and the awful power of His decrees,—she interrupted me with the exclamation, 'To Him I appeal!' When I argued with her on the sad consequences which would ensue unless she confessed, not only that her imprisonment would continue, but that even *harder* measures would be adopted towards herself and family, she replied: 'And if they flog me to death, what is it? I want nothing more from this world, and care not to enter it again!'"

In this manner she encountered every exhortation, every argument, every reference to temporal or eternal justice. She was innocent; her husband and children were innocent; she could say nothing else.

The state of opinion was so inconceivably fixed against them that we doubt whether any presumptive evidence would at that moment have had much weight, otherwise it is probable—but only probable—that this steadfast reiteration of innocence on the part of the whole family under such severe trials of their firmness, would have suggested a doubt in their favour. It was true that the barber's evidence was explicit. But there was no *other* evidence; and against it might fairly be set that of the whole family, two of them young boys, who never swerved in their statements. There was one awkward circumstance, it is true: the barber swore he saw *a* cash-box; whereas the whole family steadily denied that *any* cash-box had been in their room. It was impossible to doubt the barber's statement. The prisoners' denial looked like sheer obstinacy. Nevertheless this denial, and the impression of sincerity which innocence must have made on the priests, at least, accustomed to hear confessions and to interrogate criminals, would have had its weight, had not Maunert's wife committed a very common mistake—a mistake to which we are all liable, and which daily experience seems incapable of eradicating—namely, that of *attributing motives* to the acts of others. Whatever is done, especially when it is in anyway injurious to us, we insist on assigning to its true motive. Now the motive which really actuates a human being is almost inevitably hid-

den from us—we never altogether know it, we are not often thoroughly aware of our own motives; yet in this state of blank ignorance, we *guess* at what the motive may probably be: no sooner is that guess seen to have a tolerable consistency with the circumstances known to us, than we at once give it entire faith, and treat it as an established *fact*. "It must be so," we say; and we proceed to act as if it were so. In the present case the motives which *may* have actuated Kirchmeier are numerous, but could not be known to another. Had Maunert's wife contented herself with saying: "Kirchmeier has sworn falsely. Why? I do not know; how *should* I know why?" her assertion would have been forcible; but unhappily she could not rest satisfied without *guessing* at his motives, and stated that what she guessed was the fact. Kirchmeier, she said, had sworn against them, because Maunert owed him some money for shaving, and had not made him a New-Year's present! To an irritated and feeble female intellect this doubtless seemed an adequate motive; at any rate it was the motive she guessed, and, having guessed it, she believed it. On the public mind this accusation produced no effect save that of strengthening the prejudice against her family.

It is clear from the concluding words of the priest's report, that a misgiving had entered his mind respecting the guilt of this family. "My

heart beats sorely," he says, "at the obstinacy of these people (who otherwise seem to have lived honestly though in poor circumstances), if they are guilty; but still more at their fate if they are innocent,—if Kirchmeier has been mistaken, or if, like other men, he has been capable of having been led astray."

Up to this time a plausible explanation had been propounded, and of course unhesitatingly accepted, as to the mode in which the cash-box had been transferred from Schönleben's dwelling to that of Maunert. As we do not sufficiently understand the localities to form a correct idea of this explanation, we shall not trouble the reader with it. Enough that at this juncture it was proved by professional witnesses that the said explanation was physically absurd. The cash-box *could not* have been so transferred. Moreover, the plank which had been found recently taken up and laid down again in Schönleben's dwelling, and which was one of the indications against him, now turned out to have been removed by his predecessor in that dwelling, who testified thereto.

The court felt that its case was becoming weaker. Nevertheless it had no doubt of the guilt of the Maunerts; and, since priestly exhortation had failed, it was determined to try the effect of flogging on the wife. She *must* confess! She must learn that denials were useless, and that those who

set themselves in opposition to the law should taste its full severities. It was thus decreed that she should be flogged; and in case her bodily health did not permit her suffering such chastisement, she was to be imprisoned alone on bread and water in the darkest dungeon of the prison. Should this fail, the court would proceed to the last extremity—the Rack. *That* could not fail. Abundant experience on criminals of all kinds proved that, however long they might persist in denying their guilt, however fruitless might be imprisonment, flogging, and exhortation, the test of torture was almost infallible. How many miserable victims had confessed crimes of which they were innocent, under the solicitation of the thumbscrew and boot, no one knew, although all knew that some innocent men had done so. The rack had consequently been gradually falling into disuse; but it was not yet condemned as a horror, it was not yet banished from the code of civilised nations; and the Nürnberg court of justice resolved to apply it to the Maunerts.

At this period Schönleben, still a prisoner, requested to be heard. He stated to the court that it now occurred to him, and he was ready to swear to it, if necessary, that the spangle-maker, Beutner, had, on the occasion of assisting him with the load of wood, stood some time at the door of the counting-house, and, on their leaving the house together, had said, "Your old one has a heap of money up

there; couldn't we ease him of a little?"—a proposition which he, Schönleben, rejected with indignation. To this he added, that three days ago he had *dreamt* that the cash-box had been found, and that he himself had seen it under a heap of wood in Beutner's house; whereupon, as he naïvely remarked, "he had felt great joy, and requested the magistrates to release him from prison to the sound of music."

The effect of this deposition was once more to direct inquiry towards Beutner. The Maunerts stoutly denied their guilt; Schönleben denied his; and it was thought that perhaps Beutner could be brought to confess. That *none* of them were guilty never seems to have been suspected. All the indications against Beutner were carefully collected together. The very dream of Schönleben, instead of being treated as a dream, natural enough in the circumstances, and after so long an imprisonment in a damp dismal cell, was accepted as a clue. Beutner's house was thoroughly searched; but then, where no cash-box could be found, none of course was found. In vain was every plank torn up, and every corner ransacked: rats, dust, and rubbish in abundance were there, but no cash-box, no trace of money.

Beutner was then examined, but denied ever having said anything about their easing Sterbenk of some of his money. On being confronted with

Schönleben, he persisted in this denial, and solemnly declared, like the rest, that his innocence must sooner or later come to light; and on that conviction he relied with confidence. As if to strengthen this statement, and as if no sooner was one clue caught up than the next moment it was to be broken, the very day after Beutner's examination, a smith, in whose service lived one of the witnesses called to prove Beutner's *alibi*, informed the court that this workman had confessed to him, the smith, that he had concealed the truth on his examination; that in reality Beutner did *not* go home on the night of the 29th-30th at eleven o'clock, but at two in the morning, at which hour the workman accompanied him. Why had he concealed this, and stated what he knew to be false? Because he was afraid of the punishment which would have fallen on him for having been drinking in the beer-shop past the hour permitted by the police! Hereupon all Beutner's witnesses who had been previously examined on the *alibi*, were once more examined, and they one and all confessed that it was two o'clock, not eleven, when Beutner and they left the beer-shop; they all confessed that it was only fear of the police regulations being enforced against them, which had made them conceal the fact on their first examination. There was a not unnatural suspicion excited that these witnesses had told the truth at first, and that Beutner had found some

means of corrupting them, so as to induce this retraction; but they persisted in this second statement, and were not only unanimous, but spoke out with the greatest precision and confidence as to the fact. Nobody believed them, and the strictest inquiry was made into every conceivable circumstance that could possibly throw light on their testimony; but the upshot was, that the strongest point against Beutner—namely, his supposed presence near the spot at the assumed period when the robbery was committed—was reluctantly, but inevitably, allowed to sink into utter obscurity.

The locksmith, Hölzel, who for years had been employed by Sterbenk, was now interrogated. Hölzel had three years before repaired the cash-box in question, and he deposed that, according to his recollection, it weighed one hundred and twenty pounds, was striped with green, painted with white flowers, and had the lock ornamented as the barber Kirchmeier had stated. But Hölzel added two details which, singularly enough, seem to have made no impression at the time, although they afterwards became of great importance. He stated that on the 30th of June—the day the robbery was discovered—Kirchmeier had informed him of the robbery at Sterbenk's, adding that he had seen a cash-box *somewhere*. On being asked *where*, and in whose house he had seen it, Kirchmeier *could give no satisfactory answer*. Nevertheless, *ten days after-*

wards, Kirchmeier privately informed him that he had seen the cash-box in Maunert's house on the 30th June, but since then had not set eyes on it. Hölzel urged him to communicate this to Sterbenk, which for the first time he then did.

This was all confirmed by Kirchmeier. "He distinctly remembered every circumstance, and remembered moreover that Maunert, on his entrance, seemed somewhat confused, had moved rapidly away from the table, while his wife managed to keep the barber at the door till the cash-box was hidden. He also distinctly remembered that the cash-box was such as the one described; a box with plaster-cast medallions he does not remember to have seen."

Meanwhile the medical report respecting the capability of Frau Maunert to support a flogging was registered. It stated that she was quite capable of bearing some stripes; and there can be no doubt that this cruelty and indignity would have been suffered by her, as it had been already by her husband, had not nature given an emphatic denial to the medical evidence, by carrying her off. On the 28th September, after an imprisonment of more than three months, death beneficently put an end to her sufferings. She died in great agony, bodily and mental. The priest who alone stood beside her during the last hours, declared that in the whole of his fifteen years' experience he had

never known a sadder case. The cell in which she was imprisoned was underground, shut off from the light of the sun and the breath of heaven ; as she herself was shut off from the embraces of her children and the anxious love of her husband. He also sat alone in darkness, with the knowledge of his innocence, and the knowledge that all men believed him to be guilty. The priest, in gentle persuasive accents, urged the dying woman to free her soul from its load by confession ; her constant reply was, that she had nothing to confess ; she and her family were innocent. "God will bring our innocence to light ; you will see that one day." And as the final preparations for her end were being made, she said, "God has been with me, and called to me : 'Fear not : I am beside thee.' I go joyfully to Him, for I go at once to heaven." The priest took his leave, and shortly afterwards all was over for her in this world.

As a criminal she had died ; as a criminal she was buried. In silence and darkness she was laid in the earth without rites of sepulture. At any rate she was free now from all torture of mind or body.

Three victims still remained. Nothing had as yet been pronounced as to their fate. They had everything to fear ; nothing to hope. By one of those coincidences which act powerfully on the public mind—ever prone as the public is to build

conjectural romances out of insignificant and unrelated facts—on the very day of Frau Maunert's death the advocate Faulwetter announced that his house had been burglariously entered. It was a small garden-house, outside the town, where on account of quiet he was in the habit of working over his briefs. This had been violently entered early in the morning, but nothing was stolen. On his bureau an inkstand had been upset, and the ink had flooded the papers lying there, some of which were torn and several moved from their places.

Such was the fact. Now for the interpretation. Faulwetter was one of the counsel employed in the Sterbenk case, and, as he had several times had the papers of the *procès-verbal* with him, to look over—a fact notorious in Nürnberg—it was clear that some yet undetected participator in the robbery had broken into the house, hoping to carry off the papers, and so destroy evidence which might be brought against him, or at any rate throw fresh difficulties in the way of justice. No sooner was this hypothesis started than it gained, of course, instant credit; and it set men speculating as to who the yet undetected accomplice, or accomplices, might be. The power of guessing was illimitable; and we have seen that the worthy Nürnbergers were not backward in suspicion; but with all their efforts they could get at no clue.

Even when the mystery was finally cleared up,

the burglary at Faulwetter's remained inexplicable; and not until some time afterwards, when Faulwetter was murdered by one of his exasperated clients, was even a tolerable guess as to the motive of the burglary arrived at.

Thus, day after day, suspicion rose and fell; fresh lights glimmered through the obscurity, but after leading men a strange dance, through the morass, they were all recognised as will-o'-wisps; and real steady daylight could nowhere penetrate. Weeks rolled on. Everything had been done to extort a confession, but the hardened obstinacy of the prisoners baffled every effort. Had not one of them died impenitent, carrying her bold assurances of innocence to the grave? What could now be hoped from such criminals? Nothing, except that they would yield to the persuasion of the rack. This, as we have seen, had been already threatened, and even resolved on; but with a natural reluctance, it had hitherto been left untried. Although the age had gradually learned a little more humanity—learned that torture was a terrible means of investigation, only to be employed in extreme cases, and therefore the court was slow in proceeding to such extremities—yet the age had not arrived at the conviction that torture was an infamy and a folly.

Fortunately for all concerned, this last iniquity was avoided. On the 30th October, exactly four weeks after the burial of Frau Maunert, a new turn

was given to the inquiry. Indeed, before that there had been rumours which grew more and more serious, and which directed suspicion to quite other persons than the accused. But the court would not be led away from its present course, by following new and uncertain tracks. It was felt that the whole city was implicated—that justice herself was in peril, unless the truth could be made evident. At length rumour became so loud, that one of the judges sent for the locksmith's apprentice, Wagner, and in his private house took down the following deposition:—

On Sunday the 17th October, a friend of his told him at the beer-shop, that a little while before he, Wagner, arrived there, one of Meister Berger's workmen, named the Berliner, had spoken very abusively of Meister Gösser, the locksmith, and of Blösel, his man; boldly telling the latter that people suspected him of being concerned in the Sterbenk robbery. Blösel had quietly accepted all the reproaches, insults, and vituperation of the Berliner, and sat, as if dumb, in the presence of his antagonist. The suspicion to which the Berliner alluded was founded on the fact that Blösel and Gösser had bought themselves silver watches, were dressed in new suits from top to toe, and seemed to be altogether in much more prosperous circumstances than formerly. Wagner further deposed that on the Monday after that scene, Meister

Gösser had come to the beer-shop, and endeavoured to clear his man from the imputations which had been cast on him, declaring that he had received money from his relations in Saxony, which would account for his prosperous condition.

On further questioning, Wagner deposed that about a week ago a fellow-workman of his had remarked: "Blösel is cutting a figure! He has had a new coat made. He stood treat to me in princely style—two bottles of wine at one place; and whenever we have been together he has insisted on paying for both."

Had anything else been observed? Yes, this. Since the scene at the beer-shop, Blösel had not been seen with his watch, which previously he had always carried. Moreover, Blösel had always seemed very poor; came to the beer-shop in a jacket. Now he was very differently dressed. Wagner would say, and all his comrades said so too, that if Blösel's conscience was clear he wouldn't have put up with the Berliner's language.

The investigation now rapidly changed its course. The prisoners were left alone, while this new clue was eagerly followed up. But they were only left alone after a final effort had been made with Schönleben. The court seemed more than ever desirous to extort a confession, now that the affair threatened to take a new turn. The idea of the prisoners being innocent, after all, and of having suffered so long

and so much unjustly, was of course extremely painful, and was rejected as long as possible. Hence the redoubled eagerness to get a confession, which should justify the court in its own eyes and in the eyes of men. But Schönleben would confess nothing; could confess nothing; they might do what they pleased with him, he knew nothing of the robbery. Baffled, the court asked him if he had perhaps any suspicion of one of the locksmiths who had ever done work for Sterbenk—and then suddenly asked him: Which of these men?—and if either, on what grounds? A light seemed suddenly to break in upon Schönleben. He at once named Gösser. But his grounds were not very strong. He said that Gösser was very poor, being unable to pay three gulden (six shillings) for a window ornament he had bought; that he had repaired the house-door lock; and that just before his (Schönleben's) arrest, Gösser had met him in the street, and asked if he would not soon be ordered to make a new cash-box?

Other evidence now poured in fast—evidence trivial for the most part, but helping in its cumulative effect to strengthen the suspicions against Gösser and his man. The strongest indication of all was that Gösser, who was notoriously in very straitened circumstances, had applied for a passport to Dresden—"intending to visit his relatives there." Instead of going to Dresden, he went to prison; he,

his wife, and man. His house had been searched, and facts discovered which admitted of no denial—as the accused at once saw, for they confessed all.

Christian Gottlieb Gösser, thirty-three years of age, was born in Dresden, where his father, a shoemaker, had honestly earned a livelihood, but had died not long before the arrest of his son. Gösser came to Nürnberg in 1789, and settled there as locksmith, and lived there with his wife and two children. Business was very slack with him; and it was only by serious money sacrifices that he obtained admission into the guild of locksmiths and the citizenship of Nürnberg. He thus began in debt; and was not the man to clear himself by energetic and punctual business habits. He appears to have been one of those negatively good men who keep from sin so long as temptation does not press heavily on them; who reject the idea of a crime with shuddering at first, and each time with less and less horror, till, having perfectly familiarised themselves with it, they end by accepting it as a necessity. He confessed that he had often had occasion to enter Sterbenk's house, and had become aware of the facility with which the counting-house door might be opened by any experienced hand. He was often in want of the very necessities of life; his family would not, or could not, assist him; and he began to despair of ever honestly making his way. There was a box full of

money; the half of it, nay the third of it, would help him out of all difficulties.

This idea haunted him. It grew more and more fascinating every hour. At length, on the night of the 29th-30th June, towards two o'clock, he proceeded to the house, opened the door, which he found to have been left unbolted, took out the window-pane, opened the counting-house door, and entered without having made the least noise. He was now in presence of the coveted cash-box; all was silent; all was darkness; but he knew the localities, and stealthily tried to force the cash-box open. But this was impossible; after repeated trials and failures, he tried to carry it off; but this also he found impossible without assistance. The perspiration poured down his face. He had come so far, been hitherto so successful, and now all seemed hopeless! He had incurred the risk, and not gained his object.

Suddenly the thought of his man Blösel occurred to him. *He* could be induced to assist. In another minute he had crept from the counting-house, and through the street-door, which he closed carefully, and hurried to the bedside of his sleeping apprentice. Blösel, half stupefied with sleep, heard him describe in glowing colours the wealth and enjoyment which awaited him if he had the courage to make one bold and easy stroke. It did not seem to require much eloquence to overcome the scruples

of the apprentice, if indeed he felt any; for, rubbing his eyes to assure himself that he was awake, he jumped out of bed, dressed rapidly, and followed his master down-stairs.

In the silent sleeping streets they only met one living soul, and concluded it was a watchman—it was probably the very shopkeeper who deposed to having seen two suspicious-looking men crossing the Horse-market about that hour. They found the street door slightly ajar. They entered, carried off the cash-box without disturbance, and transported it home. They opened it, and divided the spoil, during the absence of Gösser's wife. They hid the box in a hole under the workshop, and there it had remained until three weeks ago, when it was removed, broken to pieces, and thrown into the Pegnitz—the muddy stream which flows through Nürnberg.

Four days after the robbery, Gösser confessed it to his wife, who swooned away, and on recovering herself implored him to restore the money, as indeed she had continued daily to implore him, ever since. But he paid some pressing debts, bought what was needed for his business, as well as clothes for himself and family; and would not hear of restoring the money.

Gösser further declared that no one had ever instigated him to the deed; no one had even hinted at it. The idea occurred to him; he had no

accomplice but Blösel; had never spoken to any one on the subject except Blösel and his wife, neither before nor since, least of all to the Maunerts, Schönleben, or Beutner. These were entirely innocent. He and Blösel alone were guilty.

Before his arrest and imprisonment Gösser had attempted suicide, by cutting his throat with a razor; and in prison he tried to open a vein: but both attempts had been frustrated. He confessed having made these attempts "from despair." Beyond this single crime he had nothing of which to accuse himself. His life had been honest until that fatal 29th June. He could give no reason for that deed except the pressing poverty which weighed him down.

This confession was made so simply, so explicitly, and was corroborated in so many details, that no doubt could arise as to its perfect truth; and one would have thought that the previously accused prisoners would now be set at liberty, and their entire innocence proclaimed. Not so, however. Nürnberg justice, rash enough in suspicion of crime, was tardy in recognition of innocence. It dreaded the idea of having been so deplorably misled.

Gösser's wife was next examined. She corroborated in all essential points the statement of her husband. On the night in question she slept away from her husband on account of the sickness

of her baby, then at the breast ; so that she knew nothing of his getting up and quitting the house. Only in respect of the day on which he confessed the crime to her did she differ from his statement. It was on the second, not on the fourth day after the deed. She had just returned from being “churched” at St Laurenz, and saw her husband pay a dollar for some nails he had bought : on her asking him, when alone, where that money came from, he replied that Herr von Scheidlin had paid him some money in advance for work ordered. She reproached him for acting without her advice and knowledge, keeping her in ignorance of his affairs ; whereupon he replied that if she would only be a decent woman and leave off reproaching him, he would willingly tell her everything. He constantly went out into the shop, and after whispering with the apprentice Blösel, returned again ; and as she, with some impatience, demanded what this all meant, he seized her by the arm, led her into the bedroom, and having first asked her if she would forgive him, and not be startled at what he told her, he confessed all. She thought the earth would swallow her. She implored him not to ruin her and the children ; but he pacified her, and assured her that no one would ever know anything about it. She gave an accurate account of how the money had been spent—an account which proved them to have been in the utmost need ; and she

described the various places where the rest of the money was hidden, naming which sums belonged to the apprentice, and which to her husband. She declared that repeatedly she had urged the restoration of at least a part of the money, and entreated him to make his peace with God and man by a confession; but he was immovable. When she painted to him the sufferings which the innocent were undergoing for his crime, he tried to reassure her, declaring that their innocence must soon be proved, and then they would be set free.

Magnus Melchior Blösel, the apprentice, aged twenty-five, son of a working carpenter, still living in Nürnberg, confessed to all that Gösser had said. He only urged, as a defence, that he had struggled against temptation. When Gösser on the night of the 29th June shook him in his bed and awoke him by the assurance that both of them should be made happy, he asked, How? and Where? No sooner had these questions been answered than he exclaimed, "For God's sake, master! what will come of it? We should both come to grief!"—hoping by this to dissuade the master. Blösel, in subsequent investigations, did not persist in even this modest scruple; and admitted that the master's reply, "Pho! nothing will come of it," quite silenced him. He corroborated all the other details, and declared that it was on his repeated remonstrances that Gösser at length made a clean breast of it to his wife. He

had also often spoken with Gösser about the unhappy accused suffering for them, but only got for answer, that "these must be set free at last, and thus we are safe."

After a second search in Gösser's dwelling, which completely confirmed all that had been said, and which yielded upwards of 200 gulden, from various hiding-places; and *after* pieces of the iron box had been fished up from the Pegnitz, and recognised,—in fact, after no shadow of doubt could exist as to the truth of Gösser's story, the unfortunate Maunert, Schönleben, and Beutner, were lightened of their irons, and their imprisonment in many respects mitigated: but it still *continued*; and it was only by degrees that they were informed of the new turn the affair had taken.

And now imagine the torrent of public wrath against the barber Kirchmeier, whom every one accused of being the sole cause of all the cruel injustice perpetrated on the Maunerts, no one, of course, accusing himself of having, by credulity and facile hypothesis of guilt, aided and abetted. Kirchmeier was held responsible for all. It was not enough that he had perjured himself; he had misled justice, had caused the death of one poor woman and the sufferings of a whole family. He was arrested on the 4th November; and after the three confessions had been read aloud to him, was asked if he still ventured to affirm what he had sworn?

With firm voice Kirchmeier declared, "That he could still in clear conscience affirm that, on the morning in question, in the presence of Frau Maunert and her youngest son, while shaving Maunert, he had seen a dark-green-striped cash-box, painted with flowers on the cover, and the lock ornamented with four leaves, such as he had previously described, standing by the oven behind the door. It was to him inexplicable and inconceivable that God should so have suffered him to be deceived, inasmuch as he had never traced the slightest tendency to illusion, or defect of understanding, all his life. He could not believe in such a deception of his senses."

In vain were the confessions read to him; in vain was all the corroborative evidence adduced; in vain were the fragments fished up from the river laid before him; he steadfastly held to his original position, that he had seen such a box in the place stated, and on the day stated. No one knew—no one ever knew—whether this was a real conviction, or a simulated confidence, adopted out of self-defence.

And here the psychological interest of this case rises to its height, precisely where the criminal interest ceases. What mystery lies at the bottom of Kirchmeier's accusation? He was not himself in any way implicated in the robbery, so that his motive could not have been to divert suspicion.

He was not known to be in any degree unfriendly with the Maunerts, and the absurd idea of his having accused them, because irritated at receiving no New-Year's gift, by its very absurdity shows that no intelligible motive for hatred existed. If, therefore, the motive was neither one of self-defence nor of diabolical malice, what was it? To this day the problem of that conduct remains unsolved; and the psychologist may fairly ask, Was it not wholly an hallucination on the barber's part? Was not this pretended cash-box, *seen* at Maunert's, the product of a too vivid imagination giving reality to its conceptions, as Macbeth's heat-oppressed brain saw the actual dagger marshalling him the way which he was going, "and on its blade and dudgeon gouts of blood"? There are sufficient examples of hallucination, even in persons not suspected of any mental disturbance, to render such an idea very probable.

Kirchmeier declared that he had never known himself liable to any illusions of the senses. And this may have been the case. But he was of a bilious, excitable temperament; and had only quite recently recovered from a severe attack of bilious fever. If now we imagine such a man greatly excited by the news of the robbery, and hearing on all hands descriptions of the cash-box, it is very conceivable that the image of this cash-box would soon become so vivid to his mind, that to believe

he *had* seen it somewhere would be an easy, almost irresistible step. But where? That he had noticed it at Maunert's might have occurred to him, either from a dim recollection of the medallion box, or perhaps from a supposed suspiciousness in the behaviour of the Maunerts. At any rate, it seems quite clear to us that this idea of Maunert's room being the locality must have been an after-thought, since on his mentioning to Hölzel that he had seen such a cash-box *somewhere*, he did not, on being asked where, give any direct answer. Now it is in the highest degree improbable that he should have concealed such a fact—having no motive for concealment—as that he had seen the box on the very morning of that day, in Maunert's room. Not until ten days afterwards did Kirchmeier tell Hölzel where he had seen it. Having once conceived the idea that he had seen the cash-box at Maunert's, the belief could only strengthen in his mind. Indeed, this is the very nature of an hallucination; and perhaps the reader may be interested if we digress a little here to narrate an authentic case, which will render Kirchmeier's hallucination intelligible. We take it from Professor Draper's 'Human Physiology,' where it is narrated by the physician to whom it occurred.

When he was five or six years old, he dreamed that he was passing by a large pond of water in a very solitary place. On the opposite side of it

there stood a great tree, that looked as if it had been struck by lightning; and in the pond, at another part, an old fallen trunk, on one of the prone limbs of which there was a turtle sunning himself. "On a sudden," he says, "a wind arose, which forced me into the pond, and in my dying struggles to extricate myself from its green and slimy waters, I awoke, trembling with terror. About eight years after, while recovering from an attack of scarlet fever, this dream presented itself to me again, identical in all respects. Even up to this time I do not think I had even seen a living tortoise or turtle; but I indistinctly remembered there was the picture of one in the first spelling-book that had been given me." This fact of never having *seen* a turtle is worth noticing, because Kirchmeier also had never *seen* Sterbenk's cash-box; but he, of course, heard it described with some accuracy, and the description sufficed for his imagination, as the spelling-book picture sufficed for the boy's dream. "A dozen years elapsed," continues the narrative. "I had become a physician, and was now actively pursuing my professional duties in one of the southern States. It so fell out that one July afternoon I had to take a long and wearisome ride on horseback. It was Sunday, and extremely hot; the path was solitary, and not a house for miles. The forest had that intense silence which is characteristic of this part of the day; all the wild animals

and birds seemed to have gone to their retreats to be rid of the sun. Suddenly at one point of the road I came upon a great stagnant water-pool, and casting my eyes across it, there stood a pine-tree blasted by lightning, and on a log that was nearly even with the surface a turtle was basking in the sun. The dream of my infancy was upon me ; the bridle fell from my hands ; an unutterable fear overshadowed me as I slunk away from the accursed place."

For years the horror of that moment was upon him ; and although business often led him in that direction, he always went by another path, to avoid that stagnant pool and blasted pine-tree, which he had *seen* (as he believed) in broad daylight. At last reflection—he being a reflecting man—came to his aid. He asked himself whether it was not more probable that he should, for the third time, have dreamed this dream, than that the dream itself should actually have come true? "Have I really seen the blasted pine-tree and basking turtle?" he said. "Are a weary ride of fifty miles, the noon-tide heat, the silence that could almost be felt, no provocatives to a dream? I have ridden under such circumstances many a mile, and have awoken and known it, and so I resolved, if ever circumstances should call me into those parts again, I would satisfy myself as to the matter."

Accordingly, some time afterwards, he visited the

well-remembered spot. There, sure enough, was the stagnant pool; but the blasted pine-tree was not there. He searched all round, but not a stump or trace of any tree having grown there could be found, and he rightly concluded that, as he was falling asleep, the glimpse of the water had been incorporated with his dream, and that in reality he had dreamed, but had not *seen* the vision which so deeply moved him. Suppose this physician to have been an unreflecting man, and he would at any time have been ready to swear solemnly to having seen, in broad daylight, the thing which we know he could not have seen. Now the difference between dreams and hallucinations is little more than that, in the one case, we dream with our eyes closed, in the other, with our eyes open. Let the imagination be vividly impressed, and it will *see* its objects as distinctly as the eye can see realities; and when there is nothing to warn a man of his error, he cannot do otherwise than believe in it.

This is the only explanation of Kirchmeier's conduct that we can offer; and that some such view was taken of it by the court seems certain, for although tried as a perjurer, he was acquitted of having falsely sworn from any bad motive; his oath was regarded as a sincere act on his part, although he himself had been unaccountably deceived. He was, therefore, simply condemned to the costs, and received no other punishment from the court.

It was otherwise with the verdict of Nürnberg. The law might acquit him; society was implacable. In vain had he given three hundred gulden to the wretched Maunert, as the only compensation in his power for the injury done him; the public wrath was very nearly proceeding to Lynch law. He was scouted in the streets; all his friends turned away from him in contempt; neither he nor any of his family found a word of compassion or of credit; all his customers deserted him; so that to save himself from execration, if not from starvation, he had to quit Nürnberg, where he had so long been known and respected as a religious, honourable, punctual citizen. With what thoughts he must have endured this punishment, if he felt himself innocent! What he really felt was never known to others than his family; nor was there ever any clue as to whether he really continued to believe what he had so steadfastly asserted.

After such a case, the value of a single witness, however explicit his statement, and however honourable his character, necessarily became comparatively slight. No two persons would be likely to have had *precisely* the same illusion; and unless two persons swear to a fact, jurisprudence very properly sees a possibility of the witness being in error.

And the unhappy accused? Public opinion of course turned completely round, and every one was anxious to help, by sympathy or friendly

offices, those whom it had so unjustly condemned. It is not recorded how many gossips on door-steps and in beer-houses asserted that they had always thought the accused were innocent; but we may be sure that this *ex-post-facto* clear-sightedness was abundantly proclaimed. Maunert, indeed, had lost his wife, and his children were motherless; Schönleben's youngest child had also been murdered. These graves could not be reopened; but these sorrows might to some extent be lightened, and the simple good-natured Nürnbergers did their best to make the sufferers forget what was in truth unforgettable.

WITCH-HAMPTON HALL.

FIVE SCENES IN THE LIFE OF ITS LAST LADY.

[MAGA. FEB. 1864.]

INTRODUCTORY.

NOTHING can be more lonely than the situation of the Hall; and why a house of such size and substance had been built in such utter and absolute isolation, it is hard to imagine. The village of Witch-hampton, which took its name from the Hall, is at least five miles from it. This village consists of a few grey cottages clustering near a minute grey church built on a pastoral promontory of the river Waly—so near the water's edge, that the church and the taller of the quaint tombstones, with a background of wooded hills, are mirrored in the stream at "flood."

Most of the inhabitants of those hoary little dwellings are fishermen—the fish of the river Waly has a certain celebrity, and finds a ready sale at large towns both "up" and "down stream."

Behind Witch-hampton village there is a narrow opening in the hills, a natural pass. Up this winds a rough and narrow lane, gradually ascending, though with many dips and dells, for about two miles, offering no opening to the right or left. In this lane the owls cry finely, calling to one another from tree-top to tree-top on either side—mocking at and hooting the lonely belated traveller. At the end of those two miles the lane takes a new aspect; it runs along level ground, is straightly fringed with somewhat meagre and miserable firs, and has on either hand waste and sterile-looking uplands, that, having at some time been under cultivation, have lost all the grace of wildness.

The lane ends at a gate, from which start two tracks. One, holding on over wold and through wood, leads to the village of Chine-dandon, which lies behind the Hall at a distance of some miles—that is the right-hand track. The one to the left crosses an ugly bit of enclosed ground (the nature of the stones scattered over which seems to suggest that, at some time, some sort of habitation, a lodge perhaps, has stood there), to where lies an iron gate between two broken-down stone pillars. Stepping over this obstacle, I found that a grass-grown road, the presence of which was chiefly indicated by deep ruts, wound down and round a shoulder of the hill, and descended into a valley—or rather a green and shallow basin, which seemed as if it might at some

time have been the bed of a lake — shut in on all sides by wood-fringed heights rising abruptly against the sky. Through this valley brawled a stream, densely overhung by alder, hazel, and bramble, all so clothed over then with "old man's beard" (the downy seed-tufts of the clematis), that its winding course resembled a stray tress of some hoary giantess's hair streaking the November afternoon gloom of the valley.

For some time the track I followed kept beside this stream, but by-and-by, at what had seemed from a distance the end of the valley, it plunged into a wood, leaving the stream to the left, and gradually ascending. The wood ended at a gate of the same pattern as the one I had left a mile or two behind, but this still hung in its place by one rusty hinge. I found myself mounting towards the head of a narrow defile which was much choked up by an overgrown tangle of evergreen shrubs, chiefly cypress, Irish and English yew, and the darker-leaved kinds of laurel. Another gate, and then I stepped into the blackness of an avenue of pines, walking now along a road that might once have been a smooth and well-kept carriage-drive. The air here felt freer and drier; on one side I could see between the branches of the pines the pale sky, with a little faint watery flush of sunset in it; on the other, I was still aware of the near presence of a wooded wall of hill. A turn at last

in the long avenue, again a gate. I leant over it and faced the Hall.

Its windows, looking south-west, were a-gleam with such light as lingered in the November sky now the sun had set, and not only the windows seemed to reflect that wan and sickly light, but all the front of the house shone out from the darkness behind with a curious luminousness that suggested something more than reflected light. I do not know what stone the house was built of, but it is not that of the district, which, encouraging the growth of moss and lichen, comparatively soon loses all look of newness, and becomes hoary and venerable.

The great pale-hued blocks of which the Hall is built show little sign of weather, and are as free from vegetable growth as if just quarried. I have examined the building in the full light of morning, and could find about it no indications of decay.

When it gleamed upon me that eerie evening, ghastly and spectral, I felt I could more easily imagine that, at some appointed time, it will wholly vanish away, its place suddenly know it no more, than that it will crumble bit by bit, year after year, and at last cumber the ground with a heap of ruin. I say "gleamed upon me;" and having written the words would recall them, remembering how strangely that was just what it did *not* seem to do; and how, as I leant and gazed, a fantastic consciousness of its disregard oppressed

me. No, it did not gleam on me, but, supremely ignoring my atom-presence, gleamed back with unwinking eyes the gleams it had attracted from the fading sky.

I left the gate, walked up the moss-grown path, mounted the steps to the porch, tried the massive oaken door, found it fastened, sat down on the oaken bench outside it, and remembered.

From this porch the view was wide over darkening wood and valley. No sign, no sound of any living thing without, no cry of bird, no bark of dog. As it grew late—I lingered there after night had fallen—I heard noises from within—the skurrying scamper of thousands of feet and strangely human inhuman cries. But the only sounds from without were the sound of the water making a fall somewhere below in the black shadow, hurrying from its hill-source towards the river, and the sighing of fitful soughs of wind that now and again found their way up the valley.

I sat there and remembered so vividly, that, by-and-by, as the pale sky darkened above that blackening landscape, it was as if I *heard* and *saw* the things that had been. And what things I seemed to hear and see I will endeavour, in some order, to set down.

SCENE I.

It was almost dark outside, but a great fire burning in the open hearth of the entrance-hall blazed out upon the darkness, the door being wide open.

On the top step of the portico stood a young girl, very light, slight, and lithe of figure, in habit and plumed hat, a heavy riding-whip in her hand. On the lowest step stood a man, his horse's bridle hanging over his arm. The ruddy firelight glared upon his face—one of tigerish beauty—and shone on the glossy coat and fiery eye of his horse.

“You’ve won the race,” he cried, “but you’ve lamed your mare; she’ll have to be shot to-morrow. You’ve perilled your life, which I’ve no wish you should lose just yet, and I don’t see what you have gained, fair girl! Your sudden freak must be explained, Lady Ada. Many days I have watched for you; out of respect for your fair fame I did not again come near the house. To-day when I catch sight of you on the hill, you dash off in that mad style! But to-day I do not mean to stand here. If you won’t give me a chance of being heard without, I’ll make one within! I’ll take my horse round to the yard, and be with you shortly. The coast is clear. Sir Lionel and your sister are not come; your deaf old man is busy with your horse; your woman is a mile off—I passed her on the

road: so the coast is clear, and it is quite time we came to an understanding."

"Stop," said the girl. The voice was startling as coming from a young girl, it vibrated with such intense concentration of passion. "All you have to say must be said outside this house, which you shall never enter again; and must be said *now*, as I will never hear you or speak to you again—never see you again, if I can help it. I perilled my life, for which I do not care, and lamed Bess, for whom I do care, because there is nothing I value compared with the power of keeping clear of you—nothing, nothing—so much I loathe you! Yes, loathe you! that is the word: now that I have seen you unmasked, I loathe you."

He paused a moment, then he said—

"Do you know, Lady Ada, that this is a very foolish way of talking? The sooner you drop it the better for you. But we will *not* talk here. How do you know who may be in hearing? If you are careless for yourself, I must be the more careful for you," he added, with a sneer.

"All the world may hear what I have to say—that I hate you, how I hate you! that I loathe you, that I defy you! Would to heaven I knew such words as would fitly speak the bitter black rage that fills me!"

"Lady Ada, you are beside yourself. Fortunately it is, *to-day*, no question of loving or hating,

but of marrying. You are completely in my power. I need your fortune; though it is not large, I need it. These are the plain facts of my case. All I care to know now is, when you will marry me."

"Never! Wretch, do you think, because you have done me, a weak girl, the worst wrong a man can do a woman—one human creature another—a man! a human creature! a fiend! a devil!—do you think, because you have done me this wrong, that I will *marry* you?—Never!"

"Girl! you must. You are too ignorant of the world to realise your position—to know how completely you are in my power, name and fame."

"In your power!" she said, with a low laugh, horrible to hear. "Name and fame! Too ignorant of the world to realise my position! In your power!—you think so. By anything I ever held dear or sacred, I swear——"

"You shall not swear. Lady Ada, you are powerless with all your passion. In truth, your passion and your pride put you more utterly in my power. You are not one to bear *shame* meekly. You have no choice left; you must marry me. Again I tell you this. Better play with me no longer, or it is you who will be on your knees begging for that reparation which——"

"Fool!" she cried. "I *have* a choice; for I dare to die, and do not care to live. Who shall hinder me from dying? You have overacted your

part, fiend. You have no power left over a woman whom you have made desperate. That 'shame' which you have given me, which you think me too simple to understand, has freed me from you for ever. Begone!" she cried; "you have your answer now. Begone!" she stamped, and ground her teeth, and clenched her hand in fearful rage. "Begone! and may I never see your hateful fiend-face again."

"Gentler words, my lady, would stand you in better stead," he answered, and sprang a step towards her. "You forget"—he spoke these words with his face close to hers—"that by dying you cannot save your honour from my tongue—by marriage you can."

Then he changed his whole manner; he fell at her feet, holding her skirt firmly in his hand. He conjured her by the love he had once thought she bore him not to cast him off to utter ruin; to forgive both the deeds and words of passion to which her falsehood and scorn had stung him. Clutching her skirt in his hand to hold her to hear him, he poured out a torrent of eloquently passionate, of apparently penitent pleading appeal.

She listened; if her young face changed in expression, it was only that for awhile scorn overmastered hate. She struggled to free herself; when she failed—when he, having seized her hand, would have touched it with his lips, she raised her other, the whip in it, high above her head. He saw

the gesture, and caught the fierce flash of her eyes: rising, he sprang back, but just too late—the sharp lash cut across his brow with stinging effect.

He uttered a curse. Blinded with rage and pain, he rushed towards her; another moment and he would have dashed her down upon the stone; but a startled movement of his impatient horse jerked him backwards, and brought him to the ground.

“Wait!” he cried, as he rose and mounted, digging a cruel spur into the animal’s side; “my time for revenge will come. When you have learnt to value honour and love life, remember me!”

For a time she stood where he had left her. She heard him dash off down the avenue at a furious gallop. There darkly crossed her mind an image of how he would goad on his fiery horse through the darkness, till, both horse and rider mad and blind, there would come a crash. She shuddered, drew back, closed the door, and pushed to the heavy bolts.

“I wish I had not struck him! I cannot hate him so—not enough—since I struck him!” Again she shuddered.

Slowly she went up the broad black stair, swiftly along the echoing gallery to her own chamber. “When you have learnt to value honour and love life, remember me,” she repeated.

In her own room—no cosy nest or maidenly bower, but a vast and gloomy apartment, floor, walls, and ceiling, all of bare black oak, fantas-

tically reflecting the flashing of a great wood-fire, and the white bed shining out like a swan on a dark lake—her first act was to tear off her riding-dress and trample it under her feet.

An old woman, whom she had always called "nurse," and whose daughter (dead now) had been all the mother she had ever known in her mysteriously lonely and neglected childhood, came in to help her to change her dress. Besides these two there was at that hour no one in the house, and it was often so. The man had enough to do always with outdoor work, some of which often took him a mile or more away; the woman, who was cook and housekeeper, was often absent for half a day—once a-week for a whole day, riding to market and back on a stout pony.

"No such haste, child. Why, you're all of a shake!" the old nurse exclaimed, wonderingly, by-and-by. "Your sister and Sir Lionel can't be here yet awhile, so there's no such haste. My pretty, what is it?" she said, coaxingly. "You shake like a quaking leaf! You've been riding too far and too fast." Then angrily, "Lady Ada, has he been meeting you again—the man on the black horse Sir Lionel told me to warn you against?" Then coaxingly again, "Can't you speak to your own old nurse, childie? Won't you tell her what's made you all of a tremble?"

"Hate, nurse!—such hate as I never thought to

feel!—such hate as made me long to pour all my life out in a curse!”

Turning sharply upon the old woman as she spoke, the red firelight flashed upon her face, and heightened the fierceness of its expression.

Her nurse drew back from her. “God forgive you, Lady Ada!” she cried; then added, “God have mercy upon us!”

She opened her mouth, as if to ask a question, but the words died on her lips.

The girl, having spoken, had turned to her glass again. She stood there, trembling perceptibly with a tremor she could not control, but braiding her bright hair with deft fingers, her face shadowed from the wax-lights burning on the table by the loose luxuriant locks. Standing thus, half-dressed, her snowy linen drooping off her pearly shoulders, her slender, milk-white arms all bare, she looked so fair, so slight, so young, so maidenly, it was no wonder the old nurse thought—“It isn’t of such as her the devil gets possession;” and tried to believe that she had not heard aright; that the wicked words of hate sounding in her ears had not been spoken by those childlike lips.

She took up the mud-stained skirt from the shining floor, and was going to hang it near the fire to dry, when again the girl turned round so that the firelight flashed upon her face, and again spoke in the harsh and unfamiliar-sounding voice:

"Have that thing thrown away—on the dung-heap, or into the bonfire—anywhere. It'll never come clean and sweet again. I shan't want it. Poor Bess will be shot to-morrow: I won't buy another horse."

The nurse dropped the heavy cloth—the girl, crossing the room, opened the door and pushed it outside with her foot. Another day nurse would have questioned garrulously about "poor Bess;" to-day she stood aghast, agape, and dared not. She washed her hands, as her mistress bade her, then she drew from the black wardrobe of carved oak a dress of pearly sheen, which had been Lady Ada's bridesmaid's dress at her sister's wedding. She shook it, and stroked it, and held it ready to put over those round white shoulders.

Those two did not look each other in the face again that evening. The old nurse noted the fierce dry light in the girl's eyes, the sudden reddenings and blanchings of her face, the quick rise and fall of the swan-soft fair bosom, but noted these things by stealth, looking askance.

When all was done, Lady Ada for the first time gazed into the glass: till now she had only stood before it.

"Do I look as usual, nurse? Is all right with me?"

"Yes, my pet. They will say you are fairer than ever, my queen."

Then Lady Ada went down the stairs, the nurse lighting her from above till she passed into the light of the hall. She crossed it and entered the great drawing-room; here the other servant, returned from her search after cream, fresh eggs, and butter, had been piling logs on the hearth, and was now setting out a small table full in the blaze, and snugly screened from the draught, with damask, massive silver, and old china.

Lady Ada, no tragic Amazon, but a singularly lovely and fair young girl, with a rich gleaming dress of stately-rustling, pearly-grey brocade, and with cunningly-braided masses of brightest hair, began to assist her, talking and laughing merrily. Meanwhile old nurse, her darling out of sight, slowly returned to the room, set down her light, and fell to wringing her hands, with many a sobbing pitiful cry of "God have mercy upon us! Good God have mercy upon us!"

Lady Ada, in the room below, as she turned from the light, going towards the great window, presently asked, "Which way did you come home from the farm, Nancy?"

"Oh, round behind, by the good road, my pretty. It's longer, above a bit. I know I'm a foolish old thing for my pains, but I can't abide the avenue of a night, it is so dark, with them coal-black trees meeting overhead and shutting out the stars, when there be any."

"Are there any to-night? Is the night dark, Nancy?"

"Pitch-dark; but with carriage-lamps, and the roads being good, Sir Lionel will get here safe enough. Don't fret, my lady."

Nancy having finished her arrangements, left the room.

Lady Ada—the simple people about never questioned her right to that title, and she, in her ignorance, had always accepted it without any wonder—stood in the window, looking out into the black night. Since that dear sister, whom she looked for now, had left her, the wild, high-spirited girl had changed to a miserable woman, with death, despair, and hate tugging at her strained heart-strings; but she must hide all change, and she had found that she could use merry words and light laughter still, and that to others they did not sound so strange and hollow as to herself. A few moments, and the noise of wheels brought temporary forgetfulness; she ran into the hall, and on that very step where she had stood and known such rage of hate two hours, perhaps, ago, she clasped in her arms, with passionate love, a girl still younger than herself—a mere child to look at—who had flown up towards her with a bird-like swiftness, and who nestled in her breast with soft inarticulate cooings.

This child was followed by her husband, a man some ten years older than herself, fair and stately,

with a clear-cut face, the most noticeable features of which were the open brow and fearless trust-inspiring eyes. When those clasping arms were at last disentwined, and Lady Ada was leading her sister into the house, he asked, "Has my sister Ada no welcome, then, for me?"

Lady Ada stretched out a hand to him, but she kept her face averted, her eyes upon her sister, as she answered, "You know you are welcome always, Lionel."

Before they separated for the night, Lady Ada and Sir Lionel were for a short time alone. The little wife had gone to gossip with old nurse; her sister would have followed her, but that, on leaving the room, Emma had said, "Stay with Lionel, please, dear Ada."

The door was no sooner closed behind his wife than Sir Lionel, speaking rapidly and low, began—

"Dear Ada, I have said nothing to my little wife, your sister, but I have most grave cause for brotherly uneasiness. Before we left I spoke to your nurse, asking her to warn you against a——a fellow whose character—— In short, my dear girl, you know to whom I refer. Since that time I have heard enough of the man to whom I allude to confirm my worst opinion of him—my worst suspicions regarding him. Believe me, he is utterly unprincipled and unscrupulous; so bad a fellow, that it makes my flesh creep to think of the possibility of his

getting any kind of influence over any woman for whom I care. Fearing that poor old nurse forgot my charge (for I met the fellow riding madly from the direction of this house to-day), I venture, at the risk of offending you——"

Lady Ada had listened with a certain eagerness so far ; but now she broke in imperiously, " Silence, Sir Lionel ! I cannot suffer another word. Let this be enough for you, that if with my life I can prevent it, the man you speak of shall not again enter these doors."

" Again enter these doors !" he echoed, in alarm. " I thought—I did not know——"

There he paused. Seeing her face, which had flushed crimson, turn the deadliest white, he thought she was about to swoon, and he stretched out his arm to save her. She caught it, seized his hand, and kissed it.

" Dear brother," she said, softly ; " dear brother." Then, with a sort of sob, " if only I had a brother."

" Surely now you have," he answered, gently and gravely. He raised her hand to his lips, and would have drawn her to him.

" No," she said, retreating from him ; " you are not my brother, and you cannot be."

" I trust this is not so."

" It is. I will tell you why. There is safety in truth, and destruction in all kinds of lying. Some truths, people say, should not be spoken ; per-

haps this is one, but I will speak it, for all our safety. Not that it matters now," she muttered, as the dark despair at her heart gnawed more sharply there. "She must not know. You chose well, Sir Lionel; you chose as I wished you to choose. She is the pearl. I knew before she knew it that she loved you. I could not have been happy if she suffered. You chose well. How could you choose otherwise? You saw her always gentle, always loving, always good; while I—no matter. But we *both* loved you. I loved you from the first, and always. It was to deceive Emma, to deceive you, if possible to deceive myself, that I behaved so wildly. I succeeded; I shall be wild no more."

He was silent awhile, turning from her and looking into the fire. When he spoke, his face confirmed what his words said.

"I am grieved beyond expression. The unsolved mystery of your most forlorn and unprotected existence, your loneliness, now that I have taken your sweet sister from you, weigh upon me beyond what I can say. In my heart you are second to my own sweet wife, and to none other. I had hoped that you would find a safe and happy home under our roof till the time came when——" There he broke off, only repeating what he had begun with, "I am grieved beyond expression."

"But you must not be. No one is to grieve for me: I only want to be forgotten. I am worth no

love, and I want no pity. I hope she will forget me—in loving you. And you—I will not have you think of me—not with love, nor pity."

She left him ; he did not know how to interpret the passion of her last words. He thought very mournfully of this ungoverned and ungovernable girl—thought of her with true and manly honour of pity, untouched by scorn, and not without admiration of the wild truth he found in her. Then his mind turned for rest, and with thankful gratitude, to contemplate the gentler graces of his own sweet wife.

Late that night, after all in the house but its mistress slept, Lady Ada roused her nurse, and made her go with her to the gate at the end of the Pine Avenue.

What did she hope or fear to find there? She found nothing. The gate had stood open, and had offered no obstruction to that wild rider.

SCENE II.

(At Sir Lionel's.)

"Nurse, *must* she die?" asked a haggard-looking fair girl, with a gesture and accent of despair, as she drew back from a bed over which she had been leaning, trying with most passionate, tender words and caresses to elicit some sign of consciousness

from one who lay there—a young mother, whose sweet, sad face was taking the marble fixedness of death.

“Her life hangs upon the child’s. If it dies, she’ll not rally. She’s lain like that ever since she heard the doctor say that the baby couldn’t live. Come with me and look at it, my lady, and you’ll get your answer, I’m thinking.”

The hired nurse led the way from the darkened room into one next it, into which a little more light was allowed to enter.

“It won’t last the night through,” she said, stooping to examine the few days’ old baby which was held in the arms of a bright-faced peasant woman. “To think it won’t live, so much hanging on its life! when there’s a power of babies struggling up to strength who won’t know their fathers, and whose mothers wouldn’t know them, if they could help it, poor things! It’s a queer world; no—it can’t last the night through!”

“It’s not so bad as all that, I don’t believe,” said the woman who held it at her bosom. “It may perk up yet.”

“Not it, though if it were your own, Molly——”

“And if it dies my sister will die, you say, nurse?”

“I see no hope but that she will, my lady—so much she seems to love it; and she, as I told you, lying as she does now ever since that blunder-

ing doctor, bad luck to him, spoke out in her hearing."

"So much she seems to love it," repeated Lady Ada, her eyes fixed upon the fading face.

"As mothers, most all of them, do, miss, my lady," said the peasant woman.

"Give the child to me; and you, go get your supper," said Lady Ada.

"No matter for my supper; and I'd rather not have the child moved, poor lamb! Ladies like you—no offence meant, my lady—betimes don't know how best to hold a baby."

"Give me the child and go," Lady Ada commanded, with an imperious frown.

"Do as my lady bids you—the baby's past knowing any difference now," said the nurse, to whom the woman's eyes appealed.

Very reluctantly the motherly creature relinquished her charge.

"Listen to me, nurse," said Lady Ada, below her breath, when the woman was gone. (She held the dying baby very tenderly, and tears were coursing down her white cheeks.) "Answer me quickly—there is no time to lose: Has this baby any marks by which its mother would know it from another?"

"None, my lady."

"The age—would she tell that a baby a week—about a week—older could not be hers?"

"Being so ill, and the room so dark——"

"You think not; and for the rest, one baby is much like another while they are so young——"

"Not to the mother, my lady."

"But my sister being so ill, as you say, and the room so dark——"

"That's true; she'd not suspect."

"Where is Sir Lionel?"

"As I told you, my lady; just before you came he had ridden off to the town to send a messenger to ride post for a London doctor."

"When do you expect him?"

"He can't be back till nigh upon dawn, and before the doctor can come all will be over."

"Nurse," said Lady Ada, speaking very low, "I may trust you to see a thing done for her good, and to say nothing."

"For her good—yes, my lady; but, my lady, for sure it is only God above—not you, or I, or another—that knows what's for her good."

"Shall I see her die, to her husband's agony and mine, when I can help it? and how can you tell that God does not mean me to do the thing I am thinking of doing to save her? All I ask of you, woman, is silence, and to send away the wet-nurse. You can say—yes, you can say that it is her milk that does not suit baby. And if, afterwards, baby gets strong and well, who shall say it was not so?"

"Who indeed? But perhaps I hardly understand,

my lady. He'll never get strong and well. He's dying now, as you hold him, dying in your arms."

Lady Ada gazed upon the infant with a long wild gaze, then she raised her eyes to those of the nurse.

"You are mistaken : by the morning he will be strong and well."

They looked hard into each other's faces.

"But the old doctor—it will be hard to——"

"I shall have him denied the house—he has done mischief enough."

"You may trust me," the nurse said.

"I *will*," returned the lady. "Go and dismiss that woman. Take my purse and pay her well : I charge myself with all the rest."

Left alone with the dying child, she kissed it, and strove to warm it, and cried, "Oh, baby, I'd give my life for yours ; more and better than my life, if I had aught else to give, for her sake and for his."

"Nurse, he lies quite still now, and looks easier," she said, when the nurse returned.

"My lady, he is *dead*," was the whispered answer, after a brief look. The nurse took the little corpse from the girl's arms.

After a few moments Lady Ada passed into the darkened chamber. Again she leant over the pale mother.

"Baby looks calm and is in no pain now," she whispered. The face down upon which she gazed changed and brightened, faintly but perceptibly,

though the eyes did not uncloze, nor the lips move. Lady Ada rained a shower of lightest and yet most passionate kisses upon lids, lips, and brow, and then left those rooms.

She went down to the servants' hall, where all the people of the house were gathered together in pale consternation, for the rumour had got about that mother and child were dying.

"The carriage immediately and the fastest horses," commanded Lady Ada; "I am going to fetch another nurse, hoping so to save your young master. As you value your lady's life, let no one go near her rooms while I am away. Sleep may save her."

"All the house shall be still as death, my lady," many voices answered together.

(At the Hall.)

Lady Ada was soon on her way. The horses were driven at cruel speed along the wild country-roads. Just before entering Witch-hampton village she stopped, telling the coachman to drive on to the inn, and await her return with the nurse.

The September night was not very dark, but it had an eerie, evil-suggesting trouble in it. The horrible gurgling cry of the screech-owl more than once terrified the silence. But Lady Ada hurried on wildly, till the Hall, ghastly in the wan light of a waning moon, was before her.

She mounted the steps of the portico and paused there, shuddering and breathless. A great fear and a heart-sinking dread came over her, but it was now too late to reconsider. She was able to open the door with a key she had taken away with her; it was not often that the heavy bolts were drawn.

It closed behind her, and she stood in the Hall: it felt chill and damp, and a streak of moonlight entering at a narrow window fell across the open hearth, choked up with pale wood-ashes, and made it look the more desolate. She listened; there were the sounds she knew of old—a scudding and skurrying retreat, accompanied by short, sharp, shrill cries: no sound when these had ceased. She groped her way up the first broad stair, the timbers of which would groan and creak under her stealthy tread as they had never done under her free and careless feet; along the gallery—past the door of her own maiden chamber, then she ascended another and narrower stair—passed along a narrower gallery till she came to a door from under which light gleamed. This she opened, and entered an enormous room, even more bare, more desolate and gloomy than had been her own; but part of it was screened off from the rest, and in this part the nurse—her own old nurse—sat dozing before the fire, a baby lying across her knees. At a small table close by sat a simple-looking, pretty young

girl, eating her supper of porridge and milk. On seeing Lady Ada she rose, curtsied, and shook the nurse by the shoulder.

"Dress yourself warmly, and be ready to come with me," the lady commanded. On that the girl disappeared behind the screen, taking her basin of porridge and jug of milk with her.

Nurse was wide awake now, and Lady Ada went close up to her. It was noticeable that the poor old woman clutched the child with a sort of affright when its *mother* bent down to look at it.

"Muffle it up, so that it can take no harm, nurse; but make it look like the girl's bundle of clothes—get ready to come with me—say you are the girl's mother if anybody asks you."

The old woman rose—"For mercy's sake——"

"Nurse, there is nothing to be afraid of—didn't I say, *so that it could take no harm?* Don't you see that I am beginning to care for it?" Then she whispered in the nurse's ear, "Sir Lionel's child is dead. Emma does not know it; when she does, they say it will kill her, so much she loves it—so much she loves it. Quick, nurse! oh, nurse, be quick!—there is not a moment to lose—on the way I will tell you all."

"Hold the babe then, Lady Ada, while I——"
Lady Ada drew back and folded her arms.

"Put it down—it will take no harm—I will not touch it."

(*At Sir Lionel's.*)

The new nurse whom Lady Ada had travelled through the night to fetch, was thought to have done wonders for Sir Lionel's child.

Lady Ada, bending over the reviving mother, drank in the nectar wine of her thankful smile when she was assured that her baby had rallied, and was doing well. Lady Ada met Sir Lionel on his return, and told him of the blessed change in wife and child; and he, pressing her hands and kissing her cheeks, called her "the angel who had come to the rescue of his angels."

Then Lady Ada shut herself into her own room, which she had locked before she went away, and now kept locked, admitting only her own old nurse. She knelt by the bed on which had been laid the body of the dead baby, and she tried to pray for God's forgiveness, and that He would bring good to those she loved out of the evil of her lying work.

Rising, she took the little corpse into her arms and wept over it; weeping as she had not wept since the night before her sister left her.

Her old nurse, standing by her, muttered—

"It's easy enough to see. If her baby had been Sir Lionel's, she'd have found a mother's heart for it. See her put this child against her breast!—she who loathed the touch of the other, and would not suffer it to be laid there."

Meanwhile Lady Ada, rocking the child, the dead child, on her bosom, murmured—

“Poor broken lily, you shall not be defrauded of your burial baptism of tears, nor of your cradling on a loving breast. For your father’s sake I love you, baby! For your sweet mother’s sake I love you, baby! For your own sake, and because I have wronged you, I love you, baby—I love you.”

So she went on rocking and murmuring and weeping, till the old nurse, fearing for her reason, took the little corpse from her, and stealthily carried it away.

SCENE III.

Lady Ada sits in the window of her great drawing-room on an April evening. Six years and half another lie between her and that September night, and Lady Ada is now but five-and-twenty, and this is the evening of her birthday.

The lines her face takes in repose make her look older than her years; they are those of habitual weariness—her expression is one of subjection to fate rather than of submission; the expression of a slave rather than of a servant. Yet there is a something over all the face that redeems it from sullenness. In the droop of the soft-fringed lids over the beautiful eyes there is a pathetic mournfulness. But at times they rise suddenly and let

fly forth strange glances of passionate remorse and despair, of impassioned appeal, that are as glimpses of a soul wellnigh "crazed with waste life and un-availing days" in the present, with wild and evil memories of the past, with the blank hopelessness of the future.

This April evening Lady Ada's face mirrors somewhat of the spirit of that which she looks upon.

It is the time of year when Witch-hampton Hall is fairest, the desolation of winter being clothed upon with beauty, but the place not yet choked up with the too rank luxuriance of summer vegetation. The trees, which grow too thick and too near the house, are only just faintly smiling into spring verdure; the copses all about are just beginning to flutter myriads of leafy wings above starry beds of primroses and hazy mists of hyacinths.

Glory of glories—though its most golden glory is now beginning to fade—far off, beyond the Pine Avenue and the wood, in the open expanse of the valley, is spread the field of the cloth-of-gold (a countless host of daffodils), changing sheen in each changing light, each breeze seeming to ripple up some deeper depth of glory.

Lady Ada watches the fading off of the last sunlight as the sun sinks behind the wooded hill. She is listening to the spring-beauty of the world—sitting lonely and lovely, and looking down upon such a wealth of lonely loveliness. Strange wonderings

wander through her soul. She feels vaguely as if Love spoke to her from all this beauty upon which she alone looks—that Infinite Love which alone can pour out beauty thus, without measure and without stint. She feels for a few moments as if the great Love, loving the world with spring, included her in its loving—not only included her, but crowned her, singled her out. Then suddenly she thinks, “Where then was this love when a blight was suffered to fall on all my life? How had I sinned so much beyond others that on me fell such black and hateful horror? If He is love—loving as a father; if He is strength—strong to omnipotence; what had I done that He let my orphan weakness cry out in vain?—that He turned His face aside, withheld His arm, and suffered the wicked to triumph?”

She had been ungoverned and ungovernable, had gloried in freedom, had rejected counsel, had been wild and reckless. But to that fatal, final, and most ignorantly innocent recklessness which had ended in such ruin as there was no possibility of her having foreseen—plunging her into a gulf of shame, of terror, of loathing disgust of the very existence of which as a possibility there was no knowledge in her to forewarn her—she had been driven by something better than mere wilfulness; there had been a wild generosity of motive. She had meant, being false to herself, to be true to those she loved. She had affected a fancy which had no existence within her

to conceal a passion, any explosion or revelation of which might have endangered the happiness of her sister. Was there need she should be so sternly taught that truth cannot come out of falsehood—that evil must not be done that good may come? If this was destined to be the lesson of her life, the hardest text of it was yet to be learnt.

"Is it then," murmured Lady Ada, "that the Lord our God is a jealous God, and that ruin falls on those who would set their will above His, or who dare to think they can help out His will?"

Is Lady Ada most of a heathen, a Jewess, or a Christian? As yet her inward life is a strange medley. As she thinks of the past, her hands involuntarily clench themselves in hate, and her features grow haggard, fierce even to ugliness. All the fair serenity passes from her face, for she no longer looks out on what is fair and calm, but within on what is foul and turbid.

"Why such foul thoughts on so fair an evening?" she cried, rising suddenly. She walked to and fro in the room, seeking to escape them. This great room has somewhat of a gaunt and hungry look; so large, so bare—no books, no music, no flowers, no little feminine odds and ends of ornament and furniture. As regards essentials, it is much as it has always been through all the years of the lives of the two orphan and desolate girls who had grown up at the Hall. But somehow, since Emma had gone

away, it had always seemed to Lady Ada quite different.

Lady Ada returns to the window, opens one of the casements, and, leaning out into the coloured twilight, listens to the singing of full-throated birds; and, as she listens, her heart grows overfull, her throat fills, her eyes fill—great tears drop down on to the stones beneath. Suddenly she clears her eyes, dashing the tears from them, breathes forth the anguish from her throat, and fills it full of music. Emulous of the birds perhaps, she, leaning forth into the holy evening, breaks into a wild, rich flood of passion-fed, untutored song, that goes ringing down the valley, filling it from hill to hill. What she sang was a wild old Welsh melody to which her heart set words, and her voice rang out so crystal clear that it hardly sounded like mortal singing of mortal melody, but rather like some spirit-singing, beginning you knew not when, coming from you knew not where, no more likely to end at one time than at another. It might have had for text the plaint of sad Isifole:—

“*Lasciolla quivi gravida e soletta.*”

Irregular and wild, it echoingly played with some such words as these:—

“‘For thee, oh never more, is this world fair!
For thee, oh never more, is this world kind!’
I hear my sentence shrieked out by the wind,
From the black pines that mock my dull despair.”

'Never more!' Never more? Ah, God, so young!
And no warmth left for me in sun and shine!
The goblet broken as I lipped the wine,
And I left desolate, desert, undone!"

Something after such fashion sang Lady Ada, leaning her fair head on the stone-work of the casement, looking forth with white fair face and bright disordered hair over darkening wood and valley, holding her small hands folded upon her breast.

After a time her singing lost its full-toned wildness, and became more of a murmuring plaint, less of a lament than of an appeal, and the '*Sehnsucht nach der Liebe*' which was its soul was not wholly vague.

When, by-and-by, at some little noise in the room, she turned, still singing, she met the gaze of a pair of eyes that had not been far from her thoughts—her unconscious heart-thoughts.

Her voice died away, and she listened to a dearer voice as her hand was taken and held a moment.

"I stood below at the avenue gate in the black shadow, and listened till a vague, superstitious fear trembled through me, and I almost doubted if it were the earthly singing of a mortal maiden. A few hours since I was treading the mud and mire of a crowded city, and was shoulder to shoulder with its squalid misery. The change is bewildering. Your singing was just the crowning enchantment of your enchanted valley."

She smiled sweetly into the gravely-loving face.

"You see I am just as free here as the birds, and I suppose I am almost as wild. From morning till evening, from the beginning of the week to the week's end, I am alone. I am quite free to please myself in all things—to sing or keep silent—and this evening the singing mood was on me."

She sat down where she had sat before she began to sing. A faint flush had slowly crept over her face.

"You have quite lately seen my sister and Sir Lionel?" she asked, as she pointed out a seat to him with the unconsciously queenly manner she had sometimes.

"I stayed with them a few days, leaving them only last evening. I am heavily charged with loving messages; they have not forgotten what day this is. Let me add my earnest wishes that your life may be blessed and crowned with all that infinite Love holds to be best for you——"

"Thank you—oh, I thank you," she breathed out—looked as if she would have said more, but paused. "They are well?" she asked, abruptly.

"Well—and happy as few people know how to be."

"Thank God!" said Lady Ada, softly, and a sweet peacefulness overspread her face. "Have you ever seen a woman as lovely as my Emma?" she asked.

"I have seen one woman who at times looks as lovely, but not always."

"Do you mean me?" asked Lady Ada, the hot blood mantling over her face.

"Yes," he answered, with a grave smile.

She remained silent and thoughtful, grew very pale, and shuddered. Presently she said—and there was the softest witchery of sweet unconscious appeal in her poor face—"I might, perhaps, have been as lovely if, when I was as young, I had been as much loved. Yet I think not even then, for she was always good; from the very earliest I can remember her the gentlest sweet creature always."

"You are cold," he said, noticing how again she shuddered, and he rose to shut the window. He stood some moments, looking out, then he asked, "Have I your permission to pass an hour or two with you, Lady Ada? There is much I want to say to you."

She shrank into herself and grew paler as she answered that she should be very pleased.

She had light brought, the fire made up, the tea prepared. And she, wholly unconscious of conventional usages, served her guest, *loving to serve*, and showing that she did so. He suffered this, touched to the core of his heart with her soft womanly simple grace, and much marvelling how this fair girl had gained her character for wild pride and

daring eccentricity and recklessness—for her character remained to her, though her life was now altered.

Lady Ada's guest had never before been her guest, save for the brief quarter of an hour of an occasional call: but often she had looked up into his face with calm, unflinching attention, often he had looked down into hers with growing interest and pity; often, too, had she heard him spoken of with love and veneration by those she loved: often had he heard her spoken of with a loving pathos of compassion. He was a near friend and distant relative of Sir Lionel, and now he was the rector, just a year ago appointed, of the little grey church looking into the river. He thought he knew all the story of Lady Ada's life—knowing how she, as well as the gentle Emma, had loved Sir Lionel.

The hours went by, strangely swift and sweet to Lady Ada. She sat a little in the shadow, and the full blaze of the wood-fire which paled the light of the faint-burning lamp, fell on the face of her guest, whose eyes, wonderfully calm in their brilliance, often sought hers.

He spoke to her as no one in her life had ever spoken to her, with such a mingling of tender deference and authority; and at his words there opened out before her vistas of new life that should no more be waste and aimless. But when he ceased to speak, the memory of the past rushed back, and

all the high hope he had awakened died out again as that tide of bitterness surged up and filled her soul.

She said, "If ten years ago, when I was young, I could have listened to you sometimes, then I might now indeed be like Emma, as lovely and as happy—fit for such a beautiful life as you fancy I might lead; but, as it is, it is not I who can help others to be happy, good, and pure!"

"When you were young!" he echoed, with a smile.

"I am not old now, I know," she said. "Oh, how I sometimes wish I were old, that there might not lie before me such a dreary waste of years—old, and with all my senses dulled, that I should not have such power to suffer! I am not old in years, but my heart, somehow, is very old."

He listened with a smile so tenderly incredulous, she did not wish that he should believe her. He had a face, she thought, that somehow seemed all love—to love all it looked upon with all itself; not with eyes only, or with eyes and mouth, but with every line and light and shadow: withal, it was a face unmistakably manly, full of power—the power of love.

He rose presently.

"You will have a lovely walk," she said; "the moon is up. It is a lonely walk, is it not, all down my lonely valley, and then up the hill and down the long lane where the owls hoot?"

"Your lonely valley is indeed lonely. I often think of its loneliness. In the winter—at the time of those terrible storms—I used sometimes to be driven to leave my fireside and come out here, just to walk round your house and see if all looked as usual. Once or twice I was impelled to do this at night, and then the wild isolation of your position smote me with a heart-paining blow."

"You came out here in storms and at night to watch over me! How good of you!" Her eyes, filling with tears, were more eloquent than her poor words.

"Not good at all," he answered quickly, "for I could not help it! It was for my ease. I am fast learning, Lady Ada, to be uneasy always when I am not near you—for I love you."

"You—love—me!" she faltered.

"Is it so strange? Having seen your sweet, fair face shining below me, star-bright, in my little dusky church so often? Having heard your sweet, fair name so often named with love by lips I love? Is it so strange that I have learned to love you, and that I long to give you a life less desolate and waste than this you lead now? Is this strange, my sweet lady?"

"Is it strange?—'my sweet, fair name!' Ah, heaven! you cannot think how strange!—strange as music from heaven heard by one in hell."

This she murmured, cowering back as much into

the dusk as might be, and with her hands hiding her burning face. His words had wakened feelings that had been but lightly sleeping: her heart rose up and cried out within her that she loved him.

"It is so—strange as it may seem to you, it is so! Has your heart any love to give me? Will you trust your loneliness to my love, your liberty to my law? Will you be my wife?"

"Wife," she whispered to herself. "His wife—happiness, love—love, happiness—for me! Tempted, tempted, tempted——"

Of the devil—and love is of God, and brings strength to resist the temptations of the devil. It brought her strength; she took her hands from before her poor, quivering face; she looked up into his face, and said, in a voice that strove to be firm—

"I thank you, from my heart. I love you, from my heart. It is my love for you makes me able to be true. Loving you, I would not wrong you. I cannot marry you—I must not marry any one. There is something stands between. I am not what you think me." Again she cowered into the darkness, and again she hid her burning face.

What did he think? Why, that the exquisite delicacy of her maiden modesty made her thus morbidly reproach herself that she had loved Sir Lionel with unrequited love—Sir Lionel who had loved her sister.

"At least," she answered to his further pleadings, "leave me now, and let me have time to think." Was the devil reasserting himself?

He answered, "I will take that time to hope," and having kissed her hand, he left her.

.

An hour later, old nurse found her darling weeping, passionately, convulsively. She had thrown herself upon the floor, and laid her fair head where his feet had been.

The old woman, not without suspicion of what had passed, raised the poor girl, and strove to calm her.

"Oh, nurse, I love him, and I would so fain be happy," she sobbed. "But I may not, I dare not. As a little child longs for its mother, and stretches its arms towards her, and on her bosom knows rest, so I long for his love, and stretch towards it, and in his bosom could know rest. But I may not—I dare not."

"May not! dare not! Who says so, lamb of mine?" she cried, with passionate pride.

"I say so, nurse. I blot *his* life with mine!—he, of all men—he whose life is so pure, so good—he of all men, to have for a wife a woman such as I am!—a woman whose shame may at any moment be in all mouths."

"Hush, hush, hush!" cried the nurse, and then

there followed a to and fro of passionate talk. By-and-by Lady Ada, wearied out, rested her head on her nurse's shoulder and murmured—

"It shall be then, as you say. He will come to-morrow—you will tell him; after—I shall see him no more—but oh, I love him, nurse, I love him—I will go on loving him. Remembering that he has loved me, I will try to grow good."

.

Next day, at the same twilight hour, Lady Ada stood in her drawing-room, waiting for one last look, waiting to see him whom she loved go away—leaving her for ever. Old nurse had met him outside the house, to make sure of speaking to him before he saw her lady.

A step across the hall—his step—he entered the room.

Like a wild thing driven to bay, Lady Ada left the window to crouch, literally crouch, hiding her face with her hands, in the darkest corner of the room. But when he came close, when he spoke, when she felt his nearness and heard his voice, she rose up, drove the burning blood back from her face, stood before him white and calm: the holy might of her love gave her power so tacitly to honour the untarnished purity of her soul and will.

The last fair light of evening was full upon his face; she looked into it, and even then wondered

at its beauty. He raised her hand to his lips, and did not release it. She spoke first—

“You leave me, but not in scorn; you are too noble to know scorn. May God in heaven bless you for ever and ever for having loved me, for your gentleness in leaving me. And now, for pity’s sake, go.” She ended with a heart-broken passion of appeal shrilling her voice, and would have sunk down upon the ground.

But he took her in his arms and pressed her head against his breast, and made her understand how he meant that it should be with her for all her future—his arms her shelter, her resting-place his breast.

For a few moments she yielded utterly, and knew nothing but his love and her delicious rest. But soon came the sting of conscience and the chill of icy doubt, and she cried, “Nurse has been false! she has not told you all. Leave me, leave me, leave me! this can never be! Leave me while I have any strength to bid you go.”

“She swore that, as she hoped for mercy, she had told me all. My soul is full of pity and of love, and I will not leave you.”

She let her head droop against his breast again. The fair present was so fair, life was so sweet, love so good, she hardly had a faculty left that could believe in the dark past as other than a hateful, hideous dream.

Yet when she had been alone some hours—when she had lain some hours sleepless in her white bed, watching the moonlight move along the ink-black floor, shaking with the fear of her new happiness—suddenly that horror of doubt again stood up and would be heard, chilling all her blood with its suggestions. She rose and moved, herself like a fair moonbeam, along the moonlit room, and passed into that in which the old nurse slept.

She bent over the woman till she wakened her, then she said—

"Nurse, did you tell him *all*? My shame, and, since, my sin? For pity's sake, dear nurse, be true! Did you tell him *all*?"

"All! as I hope for mercy at my end. I'm an old woman, and can't last long: as I hope for mercy, I told him *all*."

Lady Ada, after kissing the old woman, went back to her white bed.

The old nurse turned in hers and groaned—"Now God forgive me, and have mercy upon my poor miserable soul! But if the devil have me or no, no great matter if my lying makes the sweet lamb happy."

Then she pulled the bed-clothes up over eyes and ears, and slept again.

It was not till Lady Ada was married "safe and fast" that the old nurse confessed to her how little of her story her husband knew. She was driven

then to her confession by her fear lest the wife might let drop some word the betrothed could never have spoken ; and she then accompanied this confession by entreaties to Lady Ada, *for her husband's sake*, and *as she valued his happiness*, not to speak now.

SCENE IV.

The weather without is wet and wild ; chill, though summer is hardly gone by. A great fire blazes in the hearth of the Hall drawing-room, and, one on either side, sit Lady Ada and her sister, Sir Lionel's wife. They are both silently watching a boy who, stretched on the leopard-skin rug full in the ruddy blaze, is playing at being a wild beast, snarling, showing his pretty teeth, pretending to be a tiger who has fixed upon and is worrying the leopard.

When Lady Ada's eyes quit the boy it is to look towards the great window, outside which the trees are rocking in the tempest, black against a pale sky. When Sir Lionel's wife turns from him, it is to bend over a lovely little baby-girl sleeping on her knees. Sir Lionel's wife is more beautiful as a matron even than she was as a girl. She is dark and lovely ; dark, with that sort of inwardly-alight clear darkness that one is tempted to call fairer than fair ; lovely, with a gentle, unimpassioned,

unimpassionable loveliness, that is in some holily mystical way redeemed from any suspicion of insipidity.

Lady Ada does not look beautiful or lovely just now; in the firelight her face shows haggard, almost fierce; she brings her eyes back from the window to fix them again on the boy.

Presently his mother softly chides him for the roughness of his play, the loudness of his ugly noises, telling him he will wake and frighten baby.

"Send baby away then—I must finish killing this beast," is his answer, and he goes on playing as before. Emma sighs, and watches him with a slight sadness, a gentle fear and wonder clouding her sweet brow: then she droops her eyes upon the face of her baby-girl, and bends to touch that with her lips.

Just then the boy looked up into his aunt Ada's face: she called him to her; he stands at her knees, she presses her hands upon his shoulders, and looks into his eyes. Erect as a dart he stands there, gazing back into the gazing eyes: his lips, too thin for a child's mouth, are at first still curled as they were while he imitated a tiger's snarl: but after a while they began to quiver; he could bear that look no longer. Suddenly his proud, unchild-like face flushed crimson, and his eyes filled; he broke away from those detaining hands, rushed towards his mother, hid himself behind her chair.

"Your boy is afraid of me, Emma," said Lady Ada, with a smile that was no less than ugly, but which Emma did not see, for just then the boy burst into a howl of angry distress, which he tried to stifle with his mother's gown. The baby woke, began to cry; nurse appeared, and would have carried off both the children, but that young Lionel refused to go. He presently left off crying, and threw himself upon his rug—not to play again, but to watch his aunt Ada's face, which seemed to have for him some fascination full of fear.

"Can't you make him obey you, Emma? send him away," Lady Ada said by-and-by, shading her eyes with her hand as she spoke, but from under it still watching the boy.

"Go to the nursery, Lionel, and play there. When papa comes home you shall come down again." The mother spoke softly and caressingly. The child paid no heed. "Do as you are told—go directly," Ada commanded. The boy coloured rebelliously, but got up and went.

"Emma, you will never make that child obedient; you speak to him as if you were afraid of him. That is not the way to rule a boy like that," Lady Ada said, when the door had closed.

"I know," sighed Sir Lionel's wife—"I *am* afraid of him—afraid of making him naughty, for then he is quite unmanageable. I do not understand him. I cannot get at the good in him. I do not manage

him well: I try so hard too—I am so afraid of not being a good mother to him. He is a noble-looking boy, but he is strangely incomprehensible. Ada," she continued, in her low, calm, monotonous, sweet voice, "do you see any likeness in my boy to any one you have ever known? There is a something that has puzzled me for years in his face—it has just now come to me who it is that he at times reminds me of. It is very strange! Do you see any likeness in him to——?"

"You can hardly expect me to have found out in one day what it has taken you years to discover," interrupted Lady Ada, and her clear voice was so sharp that it startled her sister. "The boy is like his father, it seems to me."

"Like his father? Dear Ada, how *can* you think so? Surely, Ada, you have forgotten my Lionel, with his grand open brow, his tawny locks, his fearless eyes of bright sea-grey. He is so little like that I am always sorry now that we called him Lionel—little Harry is much more like his father. Surely, dear sister, you have forgotten my Lionel."

"I have not forgotten your Lionel, Emma, and still I think young Lionel is like his father."

"But, Ada, *where* can you find any resemblance? I cannot conceive how——"

"I *do* find it—both to father and mother."

"You see no likeness, then, to any other person?"

"I hold to what I have said: he is much like his

father—there is some resemblance to his mother; beyond this I see nothing to remind me of any one.”

“As to the likeness to the first, thank God that you can think so—as to the likeness to me, Lionel often says he is more like you. I trust that this is a mere fancy of mine; I shall not mention it to Lionel—it might pain him, for he always had a bad opinion of the man I am thinking of. How long since all that seems! Perhaps you have almost forgotten what a splendid rider he was! Lionel says our boy is a born horseman. You never ride now, Ada, do you? I used to think you could not live without it. What furious gallops you would have on the down up there! I remember so well how I used to sit here and shudder, and fancy all kinds of horrors, when it grew dark and you did not come home. That happened so often the last few weeks I was at home here, before my marriage, you seemed so wild and restless—it grieved me very much. I knew what it meant, darling Ada; it was your way of hiding from me what pain it was to lose me. Wasn’t it, love?”

“In part.”

“And in part something else that I think I know, too. What a wild, neglected, lonely life we had when we were young! Till Lionel came back to England there was no one to control us or care for us,—no one with more authority than dear old

nurse. It was very strange. Since I have been married, Lionel has told me what, perhaps, you knew all along—how our father deserted us nobody knows why, though some people said he was mad with jealousy, and believed that our dead mother had wronged him—how he went away and died suddenly, before he had made any provision for us beyond asking Lionel's father not to lose sight of us altogether—and Lionel's father died, and our mother had no relations alive, and so we grew up with only faithful old nurse to look after us: it was very strange, and oh, how thankful I often feel that we came to no harm! If I had not been so young and ignorant, and so used to look up to you, I should have been more frightened for you about that man. As it was, it was Lionel who taught me to fear for you; he always said that you were the more in danger, having so little fear—that the timidity which instinctively shrank from danger was a woman's best armour, and that this you had not."

Lady Ada had risen and come close to her sister. She bent over her and said—

"As you love me, never talk to me again of that past. As to that man, I hate him so, Emma, that sometimes I hate to live, fearing that he is still alive. Sometimes I hate all the world, fearing that somewhere he is in it still."

Emma shrank away a little and turned very pale. "Hush, hush, hush, my poor sister; you who love

so much cannot hate. Forgive me, darling; I did not know you had ever really cared for him—I did not know—I do not understand. What wrong did he do you? Did he make you love him, and then did he leave you, dearest? How was it?”

“You wrong me too much, Emma. It was not so. I never loved him.” She stood erect now and gazed into the fire; and as she saw again the last scene played between her and that man, her eyes flashed fiercely. “He grovelled at my feet,” she said, “and I—I struck him! That was how we parted. Emma, you have raised the devil, speaking of those evil times. He is at my feet again; again I raise my hand; my whip is in it, and I leave my mark—yes, I leave my mark. Would to God,” she added, “it had been the mark of a death-blow!”

“Ada, sister Ada”—Emma had risen, and now wound her sister in her arms. “Calm yourself, my poor darling. Let love drive out the last remnants of that old hate. You are no longer alone and defenceless. You can never more be driven to such self-defence. It is terrible to think you should ever have known such need; but that can never be again. You must forgive, my darling. We must all forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.”

“As we hope to be forgiven!” murmured Lady Ada, and leant her cheek upon her sister’s hair. So they stood, wound in each other’s arms. Presently Lady Ada said, in a strange, low voice—

"Would it grieve you much to lose that boy? You have the others, Harry and little Ada, and the lovely baby-girl. Surely you do not love that headstrong, unloving boy as you do the others?"

"If I do not, may God forgive me!" said Emma, fervently. "But do not call him headstrong and unloving—he is not always as you have seen him to-day. Indeed, he is very good and generous sometimes. Oh, Ada, why do you say I do not love him as I do the others? I trust I do—oh! I trust I do—my first-born, whom I loved so much when he was a baby, that I nearly died of fear that I should lose him. Surely, Ada, you have not forgotten that. And God spared him, and you think I do not love him? Oh, Ada, what have I done—what have you seen—that you should think so?"

"Nothing."

"Something there must have been—something that I have done, or neglected to do. Tell me what, darling Ada; pray tell me!"

Just then there was a noise of wheels, a barking of dogs. The sisters started apart—Lady Ada to ring for lights and to order the tea to be served, Sir Lionel's wife to hasten to the hall to meet her husband.

The great drawing-room was lighted up, and the crimson drapery drawn before the window, when Sir Lionel entered it, Emma hanging fondly on his arm. In the middle of the room his hostess met him.

The light of a shaded lamp fell on the glorious crowned head and on the fair oval cheek: she welcomed him with a sweet bright smile, and as she stood before him thus, she was most softly beautiful. He looked into her face with a penetrating glance as he thanked her for her welcome, calling her "my own dear sister." She met the glance with fearless gladness, and he stooped and kissed her. Then they both remembered what had passed on the night when they had last met there—that night on which Lady Ada had made her passionate confession. But Sir Lionel thought more of their only meeting since, their meeting at his house, and said—

"We have not met since that sad night when you came like an angel of light and mercy into my sad household, and, under God's blessing, saved me my dear ones." She turned from him suddenly: he said no more about the past.

"When may we hope to see your husband?" he asked, by-and-by.

"Oh, very soon; perhaps to-morrow," she answered, radiantly. "Life is very weary when he is away. I grow wicked when he is away," she added, with a look at Emma.

Kissing her sister, as she lingered in her room before they parted for the night, Lady Ada said—

"You have often told me that you longed for the time to come when I would know and love your

husband. The time is come ; I dare love your husband now, Emma dear, now that I so utterly, so absolutely, love my own. For the years to come we will be much together—at least I trust it may be so, sweet one."

"Was it true then, Ada ? Oh, Ada, was it true what I sometimes feared ?" murmured Sir Lionel's wife.

"It was. I loved your Lionel even as you loved him. I do not mind your knowing this now. I am not ashamed of having loved him ; though I am sorry—I would rather my husband had had all my love always." Over those words the gentle Emma pondered when she was alone. She blessed her sister in her heart, and praised her as most noble, generous, and devoted—could hardly grieve over her past pain, knowing her so happy now.

"So happy !" Then came a momentary doubt of the completeness of this happiness—a painful recollection of fierce looks, wild words, such as it was difficult to reconcile with love and happiness. Sir Lionel's wife determined that never again would she trouble the peace of her sister's present happiness by raising that spectre of the past—the remembrance of wrong and insult, and of revengeful passion and hate.

"A little while, and she will forget it all," she murmured ; "she has not loved long yet. A little while, and she will forget how to hate."

Lady Ada, alone in her own chamber, that same

night wrote a love-letter most passionately tender to her husband. Then she read and re-read his last letter, kissed it many times, held it in her bosom, sat holding it there, pressing it there, gazing into the fire. Tears of love and happiness filled and overfilled her eyes and ran unheeded down her cheeks.

How very fair she looks—how tender, sweet, and young, while the happy untroubled love-dream lasts ! But there comes a gradual change—trouble and fear steal over the face. “Oh, my love, my love, my love !” she cried ; “woe is me that you ever loved me ! If, a few months ago, I had known what is such love as yours—if, a few months ago, I had loved you as I love you now—I had never, never, never let you call the thing I am your own. How dared I ? How dared I ? If I had known one-half your goodness, I had not dared ! I thought I could grow good and fair in love ; but how can I, being false to you who are so true ? For years I have borne my hellish secret, and not known how it poisoned all my life. For years I have borne it for my own sake, and now I must bear on and on for ever—for yours. There is no way in which I do not wrong you—keeping silent, I wrong you, and, with all my life, lie to you ; speaking, I should kill you. There is no way in which I do not wrong you.”

She wrung her hands together — the letter

dropped from her bosom. "Yes," she said, "even the senseless paper knows that what his hand has rested on, my bosom is not worthy to hold."

"*'When you have learned to value honour and to love life, then remember me.'*"

It was almost as if those words were spoken in her ear; she looked slowly round, chill after chill running through her blood.

"Yes, your time is come," she said. "You can strike me now through one I love, and I shall feel it; through one who makes honour dear and life sweet. But, O God, merciful God, you will not suffer it! For his sake—my husband's, who is in truth your servant, pure and undefiled—you will not suffer the triumph of the wicked."

She threw herself on her knees and broke into most passionate entreaty for any punishment that she could bear alone."

"Did you call me, my lady?" asked the old nurse, roused from her sleep by her mistress's sobs and cries. She came in just as Lady Ada rose from her knees.

"No, nurse; but since you are here, stay with me. See, put this great shawl round you, and stay with me a little—you will not be cold so. To-night, of all nights in the year, it is dreadful for me to be alone."

"To-night?—oh, ay! To-night, just seven years ago, young master was born! They keep his

birthday just one week too late, as we know, my pretty."

"Nurse, what do the servants say about him?"

"Not much good—they call him an evil-natured child, and I've heard them say how that they can't understand that such a child should belong to their master and mistress. But maybe he's only a bit high-spirited and haughty—no harm in him. Any way he's a noble boy to look at!"

"It was an evil gift I gave my sister—an evil gift! and, oh, I fear it will bring her sorrow and trouble, nurse! But, nurse, surely he will grow good; surely they will make him good."

"Perhaps they may, my lamb. Don't you fret for that. Trouble must come into all lives; if they have trouble with this boy, mayhap some other trouble 'ull be spared them. Anyways, you did it for the best, and out of nought but love and kindness."

"But it was wicked, nurse! Oh, nurse, if you had let me die before that boy was born! It is terrible to live a life like mine, harming all I love and all who love me."

"Not master, my lady; not your husband, my pretty. Aren't you the joy and light of his life? No harm done while he does not know."

"All harm done, nurse. He has a false and wicked wife, and we let him think he has a pure and true one! And who can tell, nurse, how soon he may have to know?"

"It's less than likely he need *ever* know, the girl being dead, poor thing, who nursed young master; and she never out of my sight after she came into it. Trust me to guard your fair fame, my lamb! The old woman who nursed Lady Emma being dead too, and she swearing to me, just before she died, that she had never breathed a word to any living creature. Not that she suspected other than that you had bribed that girl to give up her baby that you might pass it off for the dead child, and so save your sister."

"But the man himself, nurse! Oh, nurse, he'll neither forget nor yet forgive! His words, 'When you have learnt to value honour and to love life, remember me,' will not out of my head to-night. Oh, nurse, if only you had let me die; or, nurse, if you had been true! Dear nurse, you did it for the best, I know."

"I did, my lady; and I take it not kind that you keep casting in my face now how I lied for you, holding my very soul cheap for you! These words, keeping in your head as you say they do, is a sign, maybe, that he's soon to die. I've heard of such death-signs. Since you're so set on truth, my lady, I have something on my mind I had sooner tell. Anyway it's safer that you should know, perhaps."

"About him?" asked Lady Ada, at once turning white and sick.

“About him. Two evenings ago, just at dusk, something made me take a fancy (knowing that the mother was coming here, perhaps) to go and see how the place looked where I put Lady Emma’s baby. It was in the thick of the wood, you mind, my pretty. I couldn’t find the place at first, for the moss-stone with the mark on it is choked over with the dead leaves that have fallen and fallen there these six years that it is since we set it there. While I was stirring about among the leaves, near a tree that looked like *the* tree, I thought I heard a rustling near me ; so down I sat and pretended I had been looking for beech-masts. I cracked some, and made a show of eating the kernels, all the while listening, but not looking round. I heard nothing more, and by-and-by I got up and moved away, but, after a bit, I doubled back, and then I saw a man groping about where I had stirred the leaves, digging among them with his hands.”

“Ah, heavens !” shuddered Lady Ada. — “It was——? He is here—near me—O God !”

“Hush, hush, hush, my pretty ! Hear the rest. There’s nothing much to fright ye. I tried and tried, and peered and peered, but I couldn’t make out his face, it was growing so dark ; but to-night I went prowling about at the same hour—I met him, and I mocked him finely ! I mocked him finely !” chuckled the old nurse. “I mocked him finely—made him think you’re dead.”

"Quick, nurse—quick, quick, let me hear all, at once—if—he—is—still—near—me," Lady Ada gasped, and then she fell back in her chair and fainted.

Bitterly chiding herself now for the momentary anger and pique that had made her rough and untender—for the bluntness of her old senses that did not teach her what her darling must suffer—nurse lavished all her cares upon her mistress, and by-and-by restored her: then she helped her to her bed—she would have her lie down there, while she sat by her to finish her story.

"Yes, I mocked him finely, as you shall hear.—He didn't know me, belike he had never seen me; or if he had, one old woman's like enough to another in a young man's fancy; but I knew his handsome tiger-face well enough. When I came upon him, he was standing upon the hillock where the big pine grows—from there he could see into the great drawing-room. Sir Lionel had just drawn back the curtains to look upon the night——"

"And I did not feel his nearness, and creep and shudder to the marrow of my bones!"

"As luck would have it, or a merciful Providence——"

"Alas, nurse! not for me."

"Put it as you will, only you were not there—not in the room, my lady. You were just gone up to your chamber. The children were all come down

to bid Sir Lionel good-night. I looked over that fiend's shoulder, creeping up the back of the hillock—I got behind him, and stood nigher the top than he. No fear he would hear me—for the wind made the noise of wind and sea together shrieking in the tree about our heads—so I looked over his shoulder, and saw what he saw. They were all there, as I said, and the firelight shining full on them. Sir Lionel had a boy and a girl climbing about him—his lady had the baby on her lap, and right in the midst, standing on the rug, was young master—and you not there!—as luck or Providence would have it, you not there,” chuckled the old woman.

“Oh, nurse, go on,” groaned her auditor. “Is he near me still?”

“No, no, not he. But listen. Cries I close into his ear, ‘A fine sight, sir, ain’t it?’

“Says he, turning upon me at once, fierce and frightened, it seemed to me, ‘Who the devil are you, you old hag?’

“Says I—‘it wouldn’t hurt you to keep a civiler tongue. I’m a poor old nurse-body from the village above there, with the breath wellnigh blown out of me, and the hill to climb this wild night.’ For reason of the wind, I still shrieked right into his ear.

“Answers he, quite civil—‘A fine sight, as you say—and who may those people be? And who does this grand place belong to? I’m a stranger

travelling this way by chance. Could I see the house, do you think, old mother?—not to-night, of course, but if I come again to-morrow.' (All the while I knew by the look of him that he wouldn't dare come again in daylight.)

"Says I—'No, surely! and where's the manners of you to ask it? Can't you see as the family is here?'"

"Then he—'And who are "the family"?'"

"Then I—'Aren't you a-looking at them? There's the master and there's the young master (just striking his sister), and there's the sister and another boy to be the heir if the elder should die; and there's the lady, the mistress, and the last baby on her knees.'

"Then he—'Of course I can see all that as well as you, you old fool!' (only the compliment spoken as he thought I shouldn't hear); 'but what is the name of the fellow you call the master?'"

"Then I—'I don't call any fellow master; but the master is called Sir Lionel. His other name is Winterhouse, or something like that.'

"Then he—'How comes he to be the master? I mean, has the house been his long?'"

"Then I—'About seven year, I'm thinking. It come to him through his wife, I've heard, and was in her family. But I don't know everything. I haven't lived my life in these parts.'

"Then he—and I fancied he turned whiter—'Is Sir Lionel's wife the only surviving member of the

family then? I mean,' he added, as if I didn't know the sense of his big words, 'are all the rest dead?'

"Then I—'So it seems.'

"Then he—'Hadn't Sir Lionel's wife any brother or sister?'

"Then I—'I've heard tell that there was a sister. But I'm not going to let out all I know of a good family to any stranger I meet. That's not what we poor old nurse-bodies call honour.'

"Then he—slipping a bit of gold into my hand—'There *was* a sister, you say—she is dead then?'

"Then I—'If all's true they tell, it's no pity, poor sinner!'

"Then he—'You know more than another, I fancy. You nursed her in her—in her last illness, perhaps?' (He didn't speak steady.)

"Then I—'Last illness! poor soul! It was a short and sharp one—no time for nursing, and no need.'

"Then he, quite fierce and griping my arm—'Tell me all you know, old woman!—how and when she died, and if she killed her child?'

"Then I, as fierce as he—'Who said she had a child? you spy, you impostor, you! You are the villain, are you? You are the wretch of a murderer come back to see the graves of your victims!'

"Then he—'I, old idiot? Take care, or I'll insure your silence. Where are those graves you speak of?—not in the churchyard!'

"Then I — 'There's more bodies than lie in churchyard, as there's more murderers than come to the gallows!'

"Then he, passionately — 'She was not murdered?'

"Then I — 'You know that well enough; knowing that if she had been it would have been you as done it, and none other! Sweet lamb! there wasn't another, man or devil, would have done it!'

"Then he, in a rage — 'Woman, speak! What did become of her and the child?'

"Then I, making believe to be very cunning — 'Look at young master there. He's just the age, and he's no lamb like his brother and sister.'

"Then he, quite pleasant-like, and without looking where I pointed — 'I see you are no fool. I know you now, old friend; no hope of throwing me off the scent like that. Last night I had the pleasure of watching you as you searched for something in the wood. What you did not find I did — a little grave, a baby's. But where does *she* lie — the mother?'

"Then I — 'Not with them as dies a natural death.'

"Then he, as if talking to himself — '*Dead*, that beautiful wild creature! *Dead*, and by her own hand! I could be sorry if — if it were not for this.' He touched his forehead with a finger, but it was too dark for me to see if there were any mark there.

"Then I — 'Who said she killed herself? You

villain, you! won't you even leave her memory alone, but you must blacken that?' With this I moved away, knowing he would follow me. I was in mortal terror that you would come down, and they not having dropped the curtain!

"Then he, — I not stopping or giving him a chance to speak till the house was hidden from us by the trees, and we stood at that gate where you thought he'd have been killed the last night you saw him, when his horse ran away—as for sure he must have been if the gate hadn't been set open for Sir Lionel's carriage. You remember how you made me go down with you to look before you'd go to bed that night?"

"Yes, yes, nurse. Go on."

"Then he, as we stood by that gate—'Thank you for your last words, old woman; her memory—something may be made of that.'

"He leant upon the gate, hindering me from passing through, and seemed to think. I watched him. Ah, if he'd stood by the brink of the river with that evil face, and I as nigh him as I stood then, ill it would have fared with him if he hadn't been able to swim. Old woman as I am, I'd have found strength to push him in!"

"Hush, hush, hush, nurse!" broke in Lady Ada. "Have pity on me: the sin of all your evil thoughts is mine; have pity."

"Listen! hear what he said next, with a sneer—

'Sir Lionel was fond of his wife's sister—is fond of his wife—the family honour will be dear to him. He shall pay for it though she's dead.'

"Villain as he is, that word dead seemed to hurt him—'Dead,' says he again, 'dead—and that blow?—it was only a girl's blow. Pshaw! I would forgive her, if I could afford it; but I cannot.'

"Then I—'It's likely Sir Lionel will believe any story you may trump up against a dead girl! a girl he and his wife almost worship, not knowing.'

"Then he—'It's *not* likely, unless I have proof.'

"Then I—'And there's no one body in the world but me can give it you.'

"Then he (scowling at me close under my bonnet)—'And you—you wait to know how much I am going to offer you?'

"Then I—'Maybe ay, maybe nay. I'm but poor, and I'm old and past work, and yet love life like another. But I've my feelings, too, like another; and it's not for a little I'd disturb that dead girl's rest.'

"Then he—'For the present I'll disappoint you. Just now I'm pressed for time' (here he glanced round him as he had done often before). 'If at some future period I want you, how shall I ask after you? what name do you go by?'

"Then I—'In the village up there they know me as Mother Grildes. I'll serve you as you serve me, my fine gentleman.'

“Then he—‘Old hag! I understand you.’ Then he muttered again—‘Dead! dead!—Well, I’d rather let her dust rest in such peace and honour as it may—I will, if I’m not driven to extremes!’ With a ‘Good evening, old mother,’ he moved away. But he came back and said—‘If you breathe a word anywhere about of having seen me, I’ll not forget you the next dark night we meet!’

“My lamb, you’ve not much to fear from him while he believes you’re dead. The devil is not all black, they say.”

“But, nurse, you forget. One question asked in either of the villages will show him how you have deceived him—and then his rage.”

“Wouldn’t he have questioned first rather than last, if he’d meant to question at all? He had a hunted, harried look. He’ll not stop to question for fear his turn should come to answer. He’s not much altered, and he was too well known in these parts. He’ll not show by daylight. There was old Tamling, the blacksmith, at Witch-hampton, and Ned Bury, the carrier, up at Chine-dandon, both swore, years ago, to serve him out, if ever they had the chance, *and he knows it*. He’ll not stay anywhere in these parts, or show in them by daylight. He wholly believes you’re dead, and ’ull be off far enough by this. He’s one as makes any place he’s known in too hot to hold him again in a hurry.”

"Nurse, dear nurse, no more of him. It makes my very soul sick. But, nurse, I am sorry that I ever struck him; I could almost—but, no, no, no."

"To keep silence, on and on, for ever—is that not the only punishment I can now bear alone? Is it not heavy, heavy — will it not grow ever heavier?"

So groaned Lady Ada when old nurse, believing that at last her mistress slept, had gone back to her own bed, and left her alone.

SCENE V.

(Ten years later.)

"I hate you all! I will bear it no longer—I will go away. You shall never, any of you, hear of me again, unless it is in some way that shall show you how I hate you."

A tall slight boy, whose fine-featured face was now distorted by passion, stood with defiantly-folded arms in the great drawing-room window of Witch-hampton Hall, and hurled these words at Sir Lionel.

Sir Lionel was pacing the room in great and evident agitation. Lady Emma sat by the fireside, her youngest child on her knees, the others gathered round her, aghast at their brother's insolent and violent conduct.

Sir Lionel approached the boy.

"Come with me," he said. "You are not fit to remain in the same room with your mother and sisters."

"Let them go, then. I will not, till I choose."

Sir Lionel drew nearer; his face was white, but resolute: the boy uncrossed his arms, a gleam of tigerish ferocity shot from his eyes—another moment, and there would have been a struggle for mastery. Just in time Lady Ada stood between them. In a voice more sad than severe, but that showed not the slightest doubt that she would be obeyed, she told the boy to leave the room immediately, and go to the library. She followed him.

Emma sent the children all away, bidding them not go near their brother; then she went to her husband. Sir Lionel had seated himself at the table, leaning his head upon his hands. Emma folded her arm round his neck, and murmured, "God comfort you, my poor Lionel. What will become of him? What must we do with him?"

"What will become of him God only knows," answered Sir Lionel. He tried to rouse himself from his deep dejection. Passing his arm round his wife, he added—"It would be strange if our lot had not some flaw in it: but it seems strange that this should be the flaw; and how to act for the boy's good I cannot tell. I must in some way have failed and fallen far short of my duty towards him."

"You could not help it," said Emma, timidly; "but towards him, it has seemed to me, that we have both acted from duty, and not love. Sometimes I think he feels this."

"Yet Ada, who has such influence over him, does not love him."

"I do not know," Emma answered, thoughtfully.

"I shall go now and find Ada's husband, and talk the matter over with him."

"Perhaps if, when we leave, we could leave him behind under their charge for a while——"

"I have thought of that, Emma. But it does not seem to me right that we should lay our burdens on others; we ought to learn to bear them ourselves. And Ada, ever since old nurse's death, has seemed so weak and ill that she is not fit to bear the shock of such scenes as that of to-day."

Meanwhile Lady Ada had softly turned the key upon young Lionel, and had then, with a feeble faltering step, gone up to her own room.

She locked herself in, and knelt by the window. Her face, as she knelt there, raising her eyes to the pale sky of the autumn afternoon, looked bloodless and haggard.

"The time has come!" she moaned—"the time has come! Now God be pitiful to him, my only beloved, my husband. Oh, my great one, my strong one, my true one—you who so believe in the saving power of love—little you thought how

your words—from which, since you spoke them, I have had no rest—‘If you could love him, Ada, your love might save him, for some fascination draws him towards you,’—little you thought how those words would open a grave in my heart, which, after letting out a long-buried lie, would close again over all the joy and light and life of life. My love might save him! The time is come when I must try. Yet oh, a little longer, a little longer! The years of your love, my husband, have been as days, and now the days of my life will be as years, so long and weary. A little longer—love me a little longer before I lose your love for ever. Yet why lose it? Shall I not be less unworthy of your love—a little less unworthy? Ah, but he has not known me, and now he must. My husband, my husband, oh, how I love you! oh, how I pity—oh, how I would spare you! And God, He loves you more and better; He pities you, and He *can* spare you.”

In her agony she pushed open the casement, leaning out for air. She saw her husband below, walking up and down with Sir Lionel. At the noise of her window he looked up and was startled at her face.

A moment, and she heard his step upon the stair, and then his hand upon the lock.

She opened the door to him: when he had closed it she threw herself upon his breast, her arms flung

wildly round his neck ; straining herself against him she wept as one who weeps very life away.

"My own dearest love, my darling one," he murmured, making vain efforts to soothe her. "What is it? You are more ill, more weak to-day. But what is this sad trouble?"

"I am ill, very ill and weak," she sobbed ; "and you—you are going from me."

"For two days, love," he said, with a tender smile. "But if you are not better, I will not leave you for two hours. You have been shaken by the scene with that miserable boy, Lionel has been telling me. Calm yourself ; I will not leave till you are better."

"I shall never be better till I am dead," she cried. "And yet I am growing better—it is the growing better that kills me. Kiss me, husband, hold me closer—love me, love me. One moment more. Now, leave me, dear love—I will grow calm. I shall grow so soonest left alone."

She drew herself out of his arms, and looked into his face. Then suddenly she fell upon his breast again, crying—

"My heart is breaking. Oh, husband, don't you feel it breaking? Oh, how I love you—how I love you! Remember how I love you—never forget how I love you."

"I shall not leave you to-morrow, Ada," he said, in gravest, tenderest concern ; "it is no duty that

calls me. Indeed, poor child, I will not leave you."

"We will see," she said, "it is a long time till to-morrow. Who can tell what will happen? Now go down to poor Lionel. I will come down soon."

But when he turned to obey her she called him back, and again she strained him in her arms as if, indeed, they were about to part for ever.

He left her reluctantly, greatly troubled at her state. A few months since, about the time her old nurse died, a change had come over Lady Ada—a nameless illness, a trouble more of the mind than of the body, but telling surely upon her physical condition.

During the last ten years of her life, Lady Ada had been conscious that the dreadful secret at her heart grew ever heavier. In those ten years—her husband her one constant companion, she working for and with him—her life had been struggling upwards towards a higher standard of truth and love.

Now, since the old nurse died, she had borne her burden all alone—all things combined to make its weight intolerable. No living creature shared her knowledge of the truth of her boy's parentage: this isolation of hers had in it something which she felt to be frightful. The condemnation to perpetual silence roused in her a wild, a mad desire to proclaim her sin, ay upon the house-tops. She would have

done it had not love, her love for him, her husband, restrained her.

Not many days before her nurse had died, she had learned to be certain that the man who had so deeply wronged her was dead—had died a violent and a miserable death. Since that he was not for her so much the man who had foully wronged her as the man who had once loved her, though in a wild and savage fashion, towards whom she had not been blameless, and whom she had in her heart cursed and hated. "Curses come home to roost;" she was taught the truth of the homely saying. The weight of her own hate, the blight of her own curse, came back upon her, blighting her own love, burdening her own being.

When she looked upon her son now—her son whom she had planted as a thorn to fester in the flesh of those she loved; her son who seemed to live among the gentle flock of his reputed brothers and sisters like a wolf in whom the wolf-nature has been restrained but not subdued among lambs—her son who, in his unmanly boyhood, seemed to scorn the gentleness of her he called "mother," to writhe under and revolt against the calm justice of him he called father, while, as if by some fated fascination, he appeared drawn towards her he had been taught to name as aunt—it was with remorse rather than loathing, and with an awakening consciousness that by love paid to the son, by loss and pain suf-

fered for him, she might expiate her crime of hate towards the father. Expiate her crime of hate—was that a crime? Is there anything in the teaching of Him we profess to follow, that offers the slightest justification of hate in man or woman under extremest wrong? Expiate *her* crime! But then, she would think, what did her crime matter—what mattered her fate, soul or body? If she only could have suffered and not pulled pain and punishment down on the head of the true, the pure, the good, the innocent—then——. Why, then, she would not, could not, have suffered in any adequate way. Love is the one lesson we have to learn in life. When we have learned anything beyond the mere rudiments, we know that we can only suffer in any deep and abiding manner for, through, and by those whom we love.

Nothing from without now threatened Lady Ada's tranquillity. No sword of Damocles, that one day must fall from force of fate, and, falling, would sever her from all that made life dear, now hung over her head: since it had been thus, the inward straining towards truth that at times seemed all but strong enough to expel all falsehood from her life, even against her will, seemed to be tearing that life up by the roots. Why was it now thus with her? she often questioned. For long years her love had strengthened her to hold her secret, and to live a lie. Did she love less now? Was

this why she felt that not even for his sake could she bear on longer? Or was it that love being truth, and her love having grown and strengthened in those years, left now no room in her life for anything that was false?

However this might be, the fact was, that since all cried peace and oblivion, she knew no moment's peace or forgetfulness; she learnt to dread sleep and her own fevered dreams. The inward impulse, to be wholly true to him she loved, contradicted by the love that feared the truth for what it loved, seemed to be tearing her heart shred by shred.

All good she gained, all knowledge, all experience, weighted the lie she bore. All things worked together to show her the evil of the thing she had done, and how it turned to the harm of those she loved.

When she had hated her innocent child, she had grudged it the good she did it, giving it such a father and mother; now she understood how, even to him, what she had done had been not good, but evil.

Young Lionel being home from school—sent home disgraced—had come with the others on a visit to the Hall. To the very depths Lady Ada had felt her soul stirred with pity as she saw how the proud boy held himself aloof, felt himself unloved and alone. She had felt, too, that to which no one else had been blind—her own power over

him. Then those words her husband had spoken, that if she could love, she might save the boy !

But her husband—he held her as a flawless gem, an unspotted pearl of truth, on whose pure candour the tiniest speck of the falseness of the world would show out black and ugly. How could she so open his eyes as not to blind him to the beauty and joy of life for ever after ?

It was not now *what* she had hidden, so much as the fact that she had hidden it through those long years of his love, that seemed to her the more dreadful part of that which he should have to learn and she to tell.

In the minutes that elapsed between the time of her husband's leaving her and the time when she softly quitted her room, went down the stairs, and paused at the door of the library, into which she had locked the boy, Lady Ada suffered, God only can tell how much. Pausing to try and realise such suffering, with what gratitude the sick heart turns to the remembrance of the finiteness of human power, the limit and boundedness that so safely hem us in, limiting and bounding the power of one poor heart to suffer !

The dusk seemed already to have gathered in the corners of the dark old room when Lady Ada entered the library. She paused, looked round, and thought the room was empty : one of the windows stood open. Young Lionel was light and

agile ; a spring from that window, a branch of the great beech clutched, a swing to the ground was easy enough. Lady Ada, in her wild girlhood, had often thus escaped when shut in there by nurse for some childish naughtiness. Who shall say what passion leapt up and fought in that poor woman's half-distracted mind, as the idea flashed across it that if the boy had escaped, were gone as he had threatened, speech would not avail for him, and silence might still for all be best? She was not long left in doubt. She heard a stifled sob: there, on the ground, his face hidden in his hands, lay the young creature whom all thought too hardened in sullen evil-mindedness to shed a tear.

Lady Ada went to where he lay. Kneeling down beside him, she laid a trembling hand upon his shoulder, and softly, fearfully breathed out, "My son!" and at the breathing of those words something consciously awoke within her—and—she—loved him.

Softly as those words were spoken, they sounded in her ear as the crash of doom.

Young Lionel raised himself to lean upon his elbows; he looked her in the face with startled wonder, and said—

"Why do you call me that? I wish I were your son! If *you* were my mother, everything would be different."

She sank upon the floor beside him, trembling so that she could not even kneel.

"Why do you come to me and speak to me like that?" he continued. "Why do you come to me and look at me like that? You hate me worse than they do."

"I do not hate you," she said. "If you will let me, I will love you!"

"If I will let you! You know, you know," he cried, "that I want you to love me; but you won't love me,—you can't. Sometimes I see you look as if you were trying, and then——then the look comes that shows me how you hate me—worse than the others do, a hundred times. Aunt Ada, I have *felt* you look at me as if I were *loathsome* to you. I have felt that, and I can't forget it!"

"My poor boy! learn to forget it now, and let me love you."

"You are sorry for me?" he asked, after an eager reading of her face. "You look sorry about something. Is it about me?"

"We all are sorry for you; nobody hates you: it is your morbid fancy."

"Are *you* sorry for me, I ask? 'They all are;' oh, of course. I know what that means: they are all sorry for me, just as they are sorry if a worm is trodden upon or a snail crushed. 'They do not hate me'—oh, I know what that means too, quite well: they are so good, so Christian, they cannot

hate ! But—are *you* sorry for me? *you* are not sorry about every trifle : are you sorry for me? *You* can hate ; are you sure you don't hate me?"

"I am more sorry for you than I can tell, or you can think, my poor boy. I do not hate you ; I love you."

"Now, aunt Ada," cried the boy, "what is the meaning of this? Why are you so different to me to-day? Why have you never come to me and been kind to me before? If you had, I should have been different."

"But you have had love, Lionel."

"I have not ! you know I have not. Why do you lie?" he asked, passionately. "If they had loved me and used me ill, or if they had hated me out and out, honestly, I wouldn't have minded ; but always to be well treated, to have nothing to complain of, to be mocked with the show of kindness by all those meek hypocrites—I hate them !"

"Oh, Lionel, I implore you, do not feel like that !"

"But I do feel like that, and you have felt like that. When you hated me, and your fierce eyes said so, I liked you better than any of the others who seemed to love me."

"Then, if I love you," she said, "when I love you—*now* I love you—you will not care for me any more."

"I will!" he cried. "Try me—love me, aunt Ada! I will obey you like a slave, I will follow you like a dog—love me, aunt Ada. Let me live with you always."

"Now, God help me," she murmured, and laid her head down on the boy's shoulder. Her sentence had gone forth: all was irrevocable now. Had she not felt this before? Who knows? Even on the way to execution a ray of hope will sometimes play about the path of the condemned, and make it seem less unlikely that some sign in the heavens or convulsion of the earth shall alter the face of the world, than that beneath an unregarding heaven all shall go on towards the appointed doom.

"Are you ill?" the boy asked, when she did not speak or stir. "I heard them say you looked as if you had not long to live, and I did not mean to live after you."

Her head slipped from his shoulder as he moved to try and see her face: she moaned a little, then lay quite still upon the ground.

He spoke to her; she did not answer: he took her hand up, and it fell powerless when he left hold of it. He bent over her deadly-white and sunken-looking face.

"*Dead!*" he cried, and for a moment his own young life seemed to stand still.

Then he sprang to his feet. Taught tenderness by fear or other emotion, he brought a pillow and

put beneath her head ; he got water and sprinkled over her face, he chafed and kissed her hands. Most jealously he abstained from calling any one.

When he found that she gave no sign of consciousness or life, he stretched himself beside her, laying his face upon her hand.

Lady Ada's husband had been seeking her anxiously ; presently he came into the room.

"Are you here, love?"

At his entrance, young Lionel looked up, but did not rise. "She's here," he said, with sullen sorrow.

"Good heavens ! What does this mean ? Boy, why did not you call for help ? Your aunt has fainted. How long since?"

"Not long. I didn't call help, because I did not choose that any one should come. I did what I could——"

At the sound of voices, just as her husband was kneeling at her side, Lady Ada roused herself. She put an arm round the boy's neck, raising herself to lean against him.

"Poor boy ! I have been ill. I frightened you. Poor boy—how white you look !" she said. Then to her husband—"He has been very good to me, husband." Turning again to young Lionel, she kissed him, and murmured—"Go away now, my boy, and leave me alone with my husband ; I have something to tell him. Go to your own room till I come to you, and remember that I love you."

"But you will be ill again—you will die—you will leave me, and not speak to me again."

"It won't be so," she answered. "Go now."

He rose. As he stood proudly erect, gazing down upon her, a wonderful softness was over all his fine fierce face. Her husband looked at him with wonder. At the door he turned, again gazed at her a long, strange gaze, which she met with eyes of love—yet not a mother's love for a child, so much as a martyr's love for the cause for which she dies.

The door closed; she moaned and dropped her head down into her hands.

Her husband, with soothing words and tenderest caresses, strove to raise her from the ground.

"Stand up," she said, writhing herself free from his arms. "My lord, my judge, my king, whom I dare no more call husband, stand up, and do not touch me. Stand up and leave me here. Stand up and judge me."

Then in broken sentences, passionately self-reproachful, abjectly humble—for all the pent-up penitence of years burst forth, and she felt her shame, her guilt, her falsehood, overwhelmingly—she made her confession. When she had ended—when, struggling up on to her feeble knees, she had raised her strained starting eyes and her clenched clasped hands to him a moment—she fell

forward on her face, feeling for his feet with her failing arms.

Her husband! When he first began to gather the sense of her wild words, he stiffened himself into incredulity.

That defence gave way as a thousand trifling confirmations that in another man would have been enough to have raised suspicion, rushed across his consciousness. Then he staggered, reeled as under a heavy blow—felt all things become as nothing—all life grow black and void.

He was stunned. Without losing physical power (though he had staggered back a little from the spot where he had stood when her first words rooted him to the ground, he was still erect), he appeared to lose mental consciousness.

After a while, over this black death-darkness came flashes as from the flames of hell.

Must he now loathe what he had so loved?
Must he hold as polluted both the mind and body
which he had thought so pure?

.

Then came a vast pity that sickened his soul almost unto death, as he thought what this erring woman had suffered, did suffer, must suffer.

It was the bitterness of death to see her lying there—to know that she merited to be there.

Not yet could he raise her! not yet could he touch her! Alas! she was fallen from such high estate!

He loathed the sin of her long deceit with the sternest loathing; and yet, through all, he never doubted but that he loved her still—ever should love her still. By degrees he more and more separated the sinner from the sin, and over the consciousness of her sin the consciousness of her suffering spread like a charitable mantle.

He lived a lifetime, past, present, and future, while she lay there motionless, awaiting her sentence. How long she was left to lie there she never knew; it could not have been long, for the room had seemed dusky when she had first entered it, and when all was over it was not yet quite dark.

She had not fainted again; with all the power left her she strove to keep her senses alight to read her sentence.

“Ada!” At that low sound she stirred a little, lifted her face, and looked up towards his, drawing herself a little farther from him as she did so.

She tasted her punishment, reading the changed lines of his beloved face, hearing the altered broken tone of his voice, as he said—

“How must my love have failed and fallen short, not teaching you to trust me!”

As he spoke he tried to raise her : but she, resisting him, answered—

"It is not so ; you are wholly blameless—you are wholly spotless, and all the fault is mine."

"Not all. Your old nurse—she deceived you as well as me, you say, swearing to you as to me that she had told all. God forgive her ! For the years after you kept silence for my sake, and now it is for the sake of others that at last you speak. All are dead who could have told me—all, you say—every one?"

"All—every one. Very few need know. You will tell Emma and Sir Lionel, and they, Heaven bless them ! will try to comfort you. I will take my boy and will go with him where you shall think best. Always you will be my lord and master, though no more my husband ; and you—you will try and forget me. And oh, God comfort you ! God comfort you !" She broke into a passion of heart-wasting weeping, creeping a little nearer to fold her hands round his feet. But when he spoke she stilled herself to listen.

"Forget you, Ada !" he said. "I have loved you long enough for love to have worked into the very fibres of my life. I have loved you, not knowing—now I know. That is the change in me ; and now, how are you changed from the being I have loved ? God has worked in you mercifully through love,

strengthening you through love, giving you sight through love. Is it now, when you are more love-worthy, when love has strengthened you to throw off a lie and live for duty in the truth—is it *now* that I shall dare to cast you off, you whom He is so manifestly saving by love, shall I cast off, and call unworthy of *my* love? Wife, I do not say that the cup has not been bitter, bitter beyond all word or thought; but I feel that in these minutes, or these hours, I have drunk it to the dregs. It will not work a poison-death to love. I do not say that life can ever again be for me what it has been, can ever be for us what I had hoped—the light of life is blurred, and the bitter taste of the cup dwells in the mouth. I look on and see much trial; our lives will be salted as with fire; but what matter if we come forth purified?” He paused a little and bent over her—“Love, *my* love, come to my arms. Every moment that you lie there you reproach my love and grieve my heart and make me feel myself a Pharisee; you called me lord and judge, but He has judged you, and, working in you through love, has so far pardoned you that He sets your feet in a straight path—thorny it may be, but unperplexed.”

She let him raise her now; but as her head fell back against his breast a great fear shuddered through him, lest the strained thread of life had cracked.

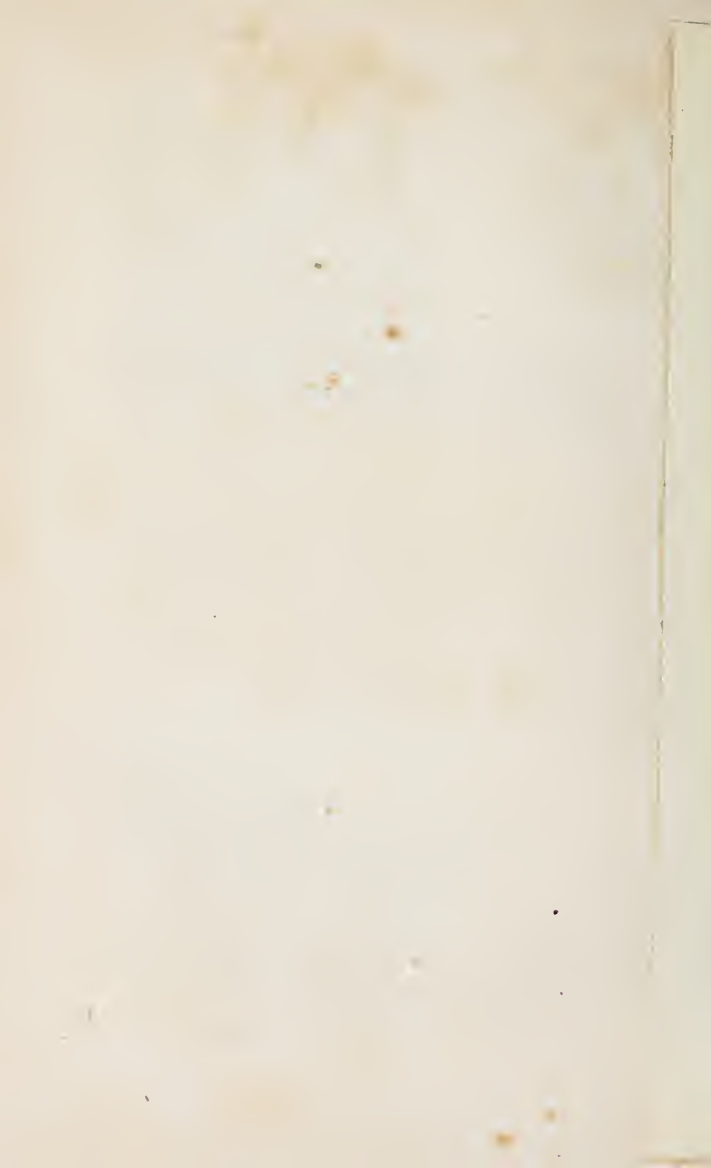
It was not so. Lady Ada lived—a life which henceforth was love.

If hatred and fierce evil passion may be expiated by love—a love, too, which knew more of the anxious grief and fiery trial of love than of its joy and peace—then Lady Ada in the years that followed must, by love paid to her son, have expiated that sin of hate against his father.

Young Lionel loved his mother; but at first with love so fierce and jealous that it threatened speedily to wear her heart out. It was by very slow degrees that his love grew tame enough to be a softening influence of his own life, and not to be a barrier standing between him and his mother's husband.

Lionel Winterhouse (he kept his uncle's name) did not grow into a noble, a great, or a pre-eminently good man. It seemed as if he might have been great in wickedness, but as if, striving towards good, his fierce temperament and wild passions made his life so much one battle to resist evil, one continual effort and struggle, that in this was expended to exhaustion all his energy. His was, looked on from without, a sad life—so much endeavour, so little achievement (as the world judged)—so much labour and pain, so little result. But who shall say it was in truth, and in the eyes of the angels, one half as sad as many a life of far more evident success? If ever, though even by little, he

continued to be victor in the warfare against evil, if within him the flame of a spiritual life, though often burning low, was yet never extinguished, who shall say that the years by which Lady Ada's life was shortened through the wear of the incessant watch she felt forced to keep, were too dear a price to pay for the saving of a soul? Her husband, giving her from as true arms and heart as ever held and loved a woman, did not grudge the sacrifice.



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